THE BIBLE OF BOXING

The RING

SPECIAL ISSUE

GATTI

WARD

AUGUST 2020

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OPENING SHOT

Arturo Gatti and Micky Ward had become good friends by the time of their anticipated rubber match at Boardwalk Hall in Atlantic City on June 7, 2003, but that bond did not prevent the battleworn veterans from letting it all hang out.

AL BELLO

MEMORIES OF GATTI-WARD

We asked our Twitter followers to share their thoughts on the Gatti-Ward trilogy for this issue of The Ring. Here are some of their responses:

All three fights were great, but Gatti-Ward I was my generation's Hearns-Hagler. Whenever I have a chance to introduce a friend to boxing, I show them that fight to show them what boxing's true potential is. The funny part about that fight is it starts off a little slow when you compare it to the rest of the Gatti-Ward series. Rounds 1 and 2 are still fantastic rounds, but from Round 3 on you will not find a better one-on-one battle in any sport. The way those two battled was unbelievable. Frank Cappuccino was the perfect ref for the fight and Jim Lampley was, in my opinion, at his absolute best. Harold Lederman was, as always, bringing great insight to the fight and entertaining us all. I can still hear Emanuel Steward yelling to go "TO THE BODY" and Larry Merchant closing out the fight perfectly by echoing the sentiment we all were thinking watching it come to an end: "I am humbled by watching these two guys take the punishment they are taking." Everything about that fight was perfect and I don't think you could've asked for a better trilogy from two fighters.

Connor
Toronto

While the action inside the ring during the Arturo Gatti vs. Micky Ward trilogy rightfully commanded the lion's share of focus, other elements also left an indelible impression. The grassroots-driven word-of-mouth buzz was inescapably noteworthy. Over the 13-month time period that the matches took place, it didn't matter whether I was in a small town like Plain City, Ohio, or New York City – everyone was talking about Gatti-Ward.

Consider that there were no belts on the line. Both of their careers had experienced setbacks, including Gatti previously losing three in a row and Ward four. The obvious question is: What was the draw? Authenticity. The main event featured two earnest athletes performing with equal measures of grit and passion. Neither man entered the ring with a belt, but in the moments that made up those three matches, they were surely champions of the world.

By the sound of the final bell ending bout three, they had crossed over from sport to epic drama and in doing so became part of a rarefied air that boxing rarely attains. We're talking Ali-Frazier, Tyson-Holyfield, Leonard-Hagler territory. Nearly two decades later, we're still talking about their clashes. I hope we never stop.

Bunky Luffman
Delmar, Md.

Truth be told, I didn't see the first fight live. The following day, all my friends were talking about it and couldn't stop raving. HBO would show an encore on Tuesday night. While being riveted, it was hard not to feel I missed out. The fight was great, but not nearly as good as seeing it live. Being partial to Gatti, I was trying to score it for him, but I agreed with the judges.

Despite expecting to be let down by fight two, I wasn't! The fight was my favorite of the three. The action was nonstop and Gatti raised his game to another level, outperforming a game and tough Ward.

There was no way fight three could live up to the first two. While it wasn't as dynamic a fight, it was every bit as compelling. HBO deemed it the "Blood and Guts Championship." It seemed campy, but it couldn't have been truer. Both fighters were willing to go out on their shield, and just as Ward was about to pull it out, he faded. Gatti prevailed. Both fighters left it all in the ring for the fans, and I feel lucky to have seen it.

Matthew M. Pomara
Center Moriches, N.Y.

I used to work at Mohegan Sun Casino in Connecticut. Well, I brought my mom and my late younger brother who eventually passed to suicide to Ward vs. Gatti I. We had such a great time. The fight was unbelievable, just nonstop leave-it-all-on-the-line from start to finish. I knew immediately it was gonna be the fight of the year. To this day, it's a privilege to say that me, my mom and my brother were there in person.

Steven Whitehead
South Daytona, Fla.

I am a junior in college, and I have been a very casual boxing fan for several years now but spent most of my time watching either football or basketball. That was the case until about a year ago, when I saw a six-minute HBO highlight reel of Gatti vs. Ward come up in my suggestions on YouTube. That short little video left me inspired, and I immediately went to watch the entire 10-round fight. It told me that boxing was so much more than the Mayweathers, Pacquiaos, Cottos and Lomachenkos of the world that I had spent my time watching.

Since I watched that first fight, I have spent hundreds of hours watching old boxing fights and researching old fighters. And nevertheless, after having watched Gatti vs. Ward upward of 50 times, I still get goosebumps and it remains my unquestioned favorite fight of all time. Today, I think back to the first time I ever watched them on that short little clip and how an 18-year-old fight has truly shaped my life in the past year.

Kyle Gold
Kansas City, Mo.

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LUCK OF THE NON-DRAW

AL BELLO

BRANCH RICKEY, WHO AS THE general manager of the Brooklyn Dodgers had the foresight and courage to integrate Major League Baseball by calling up Jackie Robinson from the minors in 1947, once remarked that "luck is the residue of design." And it is true that, sometimes, Mr. Rickey's description of fortuitous fortune absolutely does owe to meticulous planning. But just as often as something attributable to "luck" turns out well, it also can have less-beneficial results.

I thought about the seemingly random nature of the ongoing craps game that life represents while writing the story of the first Arturo Gatti-Micky Ward fight that appears in this issue of The Ring, the opening act of a memorable three-fight series that quickly became the stuff of legend among boxing fans. That trilogy, the only one in which Gatti participated during his 16-year, 49-bout professional career, may have been what raised the profile of the very popular action hero enough to gain him posthumous induction into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 2013 while also forever tying him to gritty journeyman Ward, now widely regarded as "Thunder's" primary wingman. There are only two other opponents that Gatti fought twice – Tracy Harris Patterson, whom he defeated both times, and Ivan Robinson, who edged him in back-to-back thrill-fests that matched the incredible excitement level generated throughout the epic triple feature with Ward.

But, having somewhat of a natural contrarian streak, I couldn't help but

Gatti's trilogy with Ward completed his comeback after two losses to Ivan Robinson.

play a mental game of "what-if," especially after Gatti's longtime manager, Pat Lynch, told me about what might have occurred had that first war with the victorious Ward (by razor-thin majority decision) ended in a draw, which it very easily could have. Had Ward not won the first bout, Lynch likely would have passed on a rematch, which would have rendered Gatti-Ward another one-and-done, as was the case with Gatti's epic slugfest with Wilson Rodriguez. If the outcome had been a draw, "we would not have had that trilogy," Lynch said. "There's no way I would go to another fight with Micky. I would say, 'Forget it, we don't need that. We take the draw and move on.'"

Wow. That statement says so much, and it casts new light on the prevailing circumstances of a time when both Gatti and Ward were viewed in some quarters as being on the downhill side of their respective careers. Always a crowd-pleaser if not at an elite level, Ward was 36 years of age when he was first paired with Gatti and had a lot of hard miles on his boxing odometer. Gatti, although just 30, had gone to hell and back so often that he, too, was likely facing the prospect of precipitous decline, which is often the case with blood-and-guts fighters whose shelf life as a major attraction is stylistically abbreviated. It had happened with Matthew Saad Muhammad and later with Ruslan Provodnikov, which is why astute trainer Buddy McGirt had been brought in to help sharpen Gatti's underutilized boxing skills in an effort to extend what remained of his diminishing prime.

And while what was known of Gatti and Ward was that their tendency to take risks almost guaranteed a certain amount of give-and-take, creating good television for HBO viewers, the Gatti camp had to believe that the toll on their guy would not sap too much from him in a physical sense. Except that it did, with the decision for Ward virtually dictating that a rematch be made quickly. That, too, turned out to be a slugfest, mandating a rubber match that raised the trilogy then and forever to sacred status.

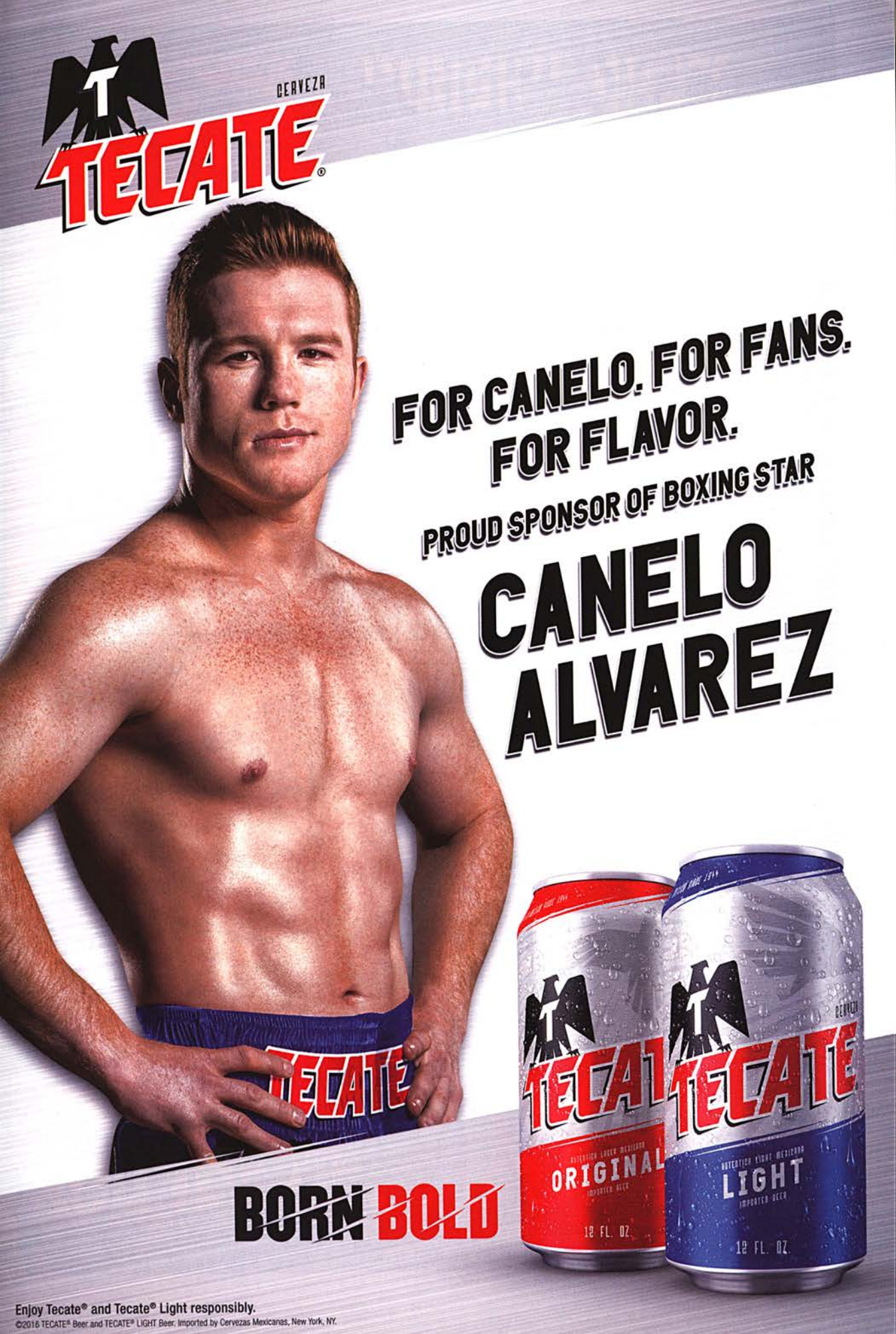
But consider what *might* have happened to alter the course of ring history. Ivan Robinson's edging of Gatti necessitated a do-over, but had Gatti won the rematch, there almost certainly would have been a third fight which, given what already had transpired between the two, likely would have been similarly dramatic. Would Gatti-Robinson now hold the place of honor reserved for Gatti-Ward? And even if there had never been a woulda, coulda, shoulda rubber match pairing of Gatti and Robinson, it stands to reason that a Gatti victory in his first bout with Ward, or even a draw, would have precluded the second and third installments in the series from taking place. By his own admission, Lynch said that might have been the most prudent career option he would have chosen for Gatti, whom he had come to regard as a virtual family member.

In the end, things probably worked out for the best for both Gatti and Ward, if not necessarily for Robinson, who for years unsuccessfully lobbied for a high-paying third go at Arturo. Apart from what took place inside the ropes, the Gatti-Ward trilogy had storylines that have become an entrenched part of the narrative. Their mutual respect led to a friendship that endured up to the time of Gatti's tragic death in 2009. Not only did they occasionally play relatively unartistic golf together, but, after McGirt had withdrawn as Gatti's trainer, Ward consented to serve as his former rival's chief second for his July 14, 2007, bout against Alfonso Gomez in Atlantic City. It was as if a scene from *Rocky III*, with Apollo Creed training Rocky Balboa for his rematch with Clubber Lang, was being played out in real life.

But real life doesn't always have the upbeat flourishes of scripted "reel life." A used-up Gatti in his final fight was stopped in seven rounds, his second consecutive loss and third in four bouts. If life were fair, he would have retired from boxing and into a new phase of his journey as happy and fulfilling as it has been for Ward, who, despite dealing with a diagnosis of chronic traumatic encephalopathy, has never reached for anything he deemed to be reasonably beyond his grasp. "Irish" Micky isn't an inductee into the IBHOF, unlike Gatti, and doesn't expect to ever be, but he has the satisfaction of knowing that he gave all of himself every time he offered up his body and spirit to a blood sport that greedily siphoned off bits and pieces of both.

"As a fighter, I was about giving my all every time," he told me. "I always walked out of the ring knowing I did just that. I know in my heart what I did, and that's all that matters."

Gatti was the same. That tells me that the entirety of the trilogy, and the "luck" of immortality it brought to both fighters, actually might be the residue of design.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ARTURO "THUNDER" GATTI

"IRISH" MICKY WARD

... NO, THEY'RE GOING TO GET 15 TONIGHT!

WARD'S MONEY PUNCH!

JUST LOOK AT THIS!!!

THIS IS IT! HE MAY NOT BE ABLE TO RECOVER...

OH-MY-GOOD-NESS!

THE FANS ARE GOING TO GET 12 ROUNDS OF ACTION OUT OF 10 ROUNDS TONIGHT--

UN-BE-LIEVE-A-BLE!!

C'MON, LET'S FIGHT!

90 MINUTES OF... PAIN,

YOU DREAM OF FIGHTS LIKE THIS...

.. THIS IS EVEN MORE THAN WHAT YOU CAN DREAM OF!..

AND WARD IS STILL WOBBLY..!

THIS IS "ROUND 9", THE SECOND VERSION!

THIS IS A FIGHT!!

THIS SHOULD BE THE ROUND OF THE CENTURY!

THIS IS ANOTHER INCREDIBLE FIGHT!

WHAT MICKY WARD AND ARTURO GATTI SHARE TOGETHER...

THIS IS CALLED "GETTING YOUR MONEY'S WORTH".

AND THEY RISE AGAIN IN BOARDWALK HALL!!!

ONLY THEY KNOW!

DOWN GOES ARTURO!!!...

30 ROUNDS OF... JOY!!

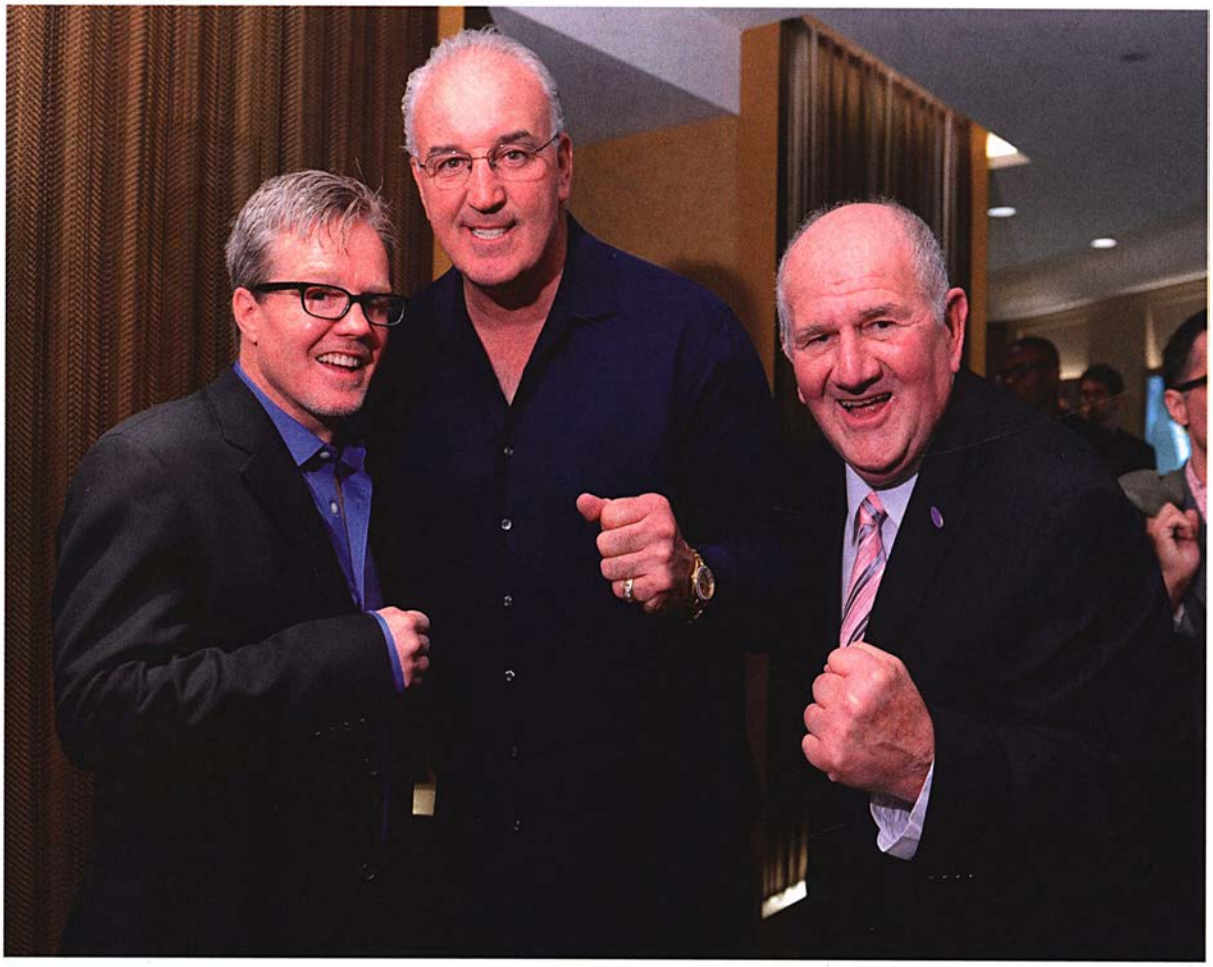
KRONIK AAART

KRONIK AAART

SOME NOTES ON THE CORONAVIRUS

JABS AND STRAIGHT WRITES

BY THOMAS HAUSER



Harold Lederman, pictured with Freddie Roach and Gerry Cooney, was as generous as he was passionate about boxing.

IN THE MIDST OF THE COVID-19 pandemic that's ravaging America, my thoughts turned to Harold Lederman.

Long before he became America's unofficial ringside scorer, Harold was a pharmacist. For much of his career, he worked for Duane Reade. Harold's assignments for HBO took him out of town for up to five days at a time. So to make up the lost hours, he often worked at Duane Reade for 13-hour shifts.

Pharmacies are at the center of our national life these days. In many instances, supply can't meet demand. Face masks, hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes – even toilet paper – are hard to find. That brings me back to Harold.

In the aftermath of 9/11, there was a scare when letters containing anthrax spores were mailed to several news organizations and two United States senators. Five people died as a result. It was common knowledge that someone who was believed to have breathed in anthrax spores should take a prescription medicine called ciprofloxacin. Patients in need were given a 10-day supply to start.

Most doctors, appropriately, wouldn't write a prescription for ciprofloxacin unless a patient was at risk. But even then, supplies grew short. People began asking themselves, "If I need ciprofloxacin, will I be able to get it?"

As a pharmacist, Harold had opportunities that the rest of us don't have. And he was generous. One fighter known for the longevity of his ring career acknowledged to me that he got performance-enhancing drugs free of charge from Harold. His PED was Viagra.

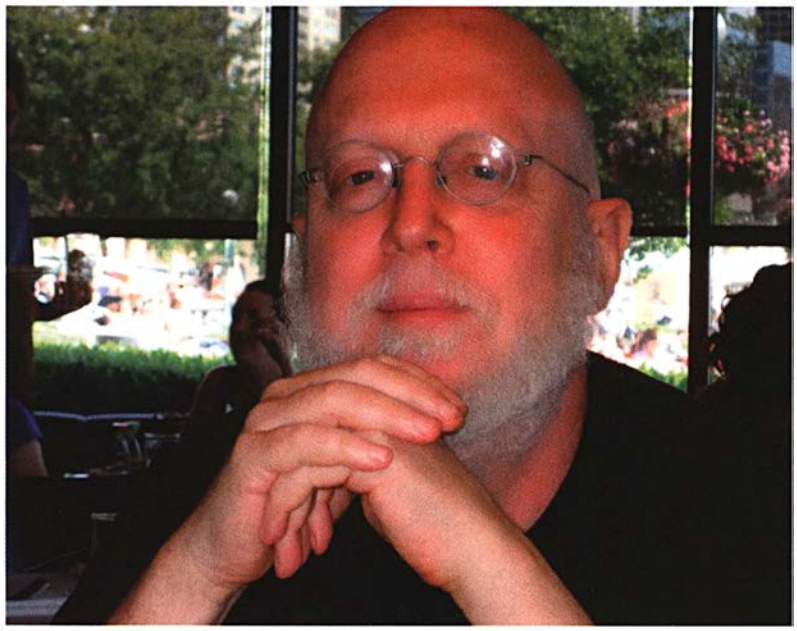
Several days after the anthrax scare began, I got a small package in the mail with a note from Harold that read, "I thought you might want this just in case."

The note came with a 10-day supply of ciprofloxacin.

THE CORONAVIRUS that has wreaked havoc upon the boxing calendar also dealt a painful body blow to Jody Heaps.

Prior to retiring last year, Heaps spent three decades as a senior creative director and executive producer for boxing-related projects at Showtime Sports. In a memoir entitled *Blood in My Coffee*, former Showtime Boxing commentator Ferdie Pacheco referenced him as "a former beatnik who had washed up on the shores of Showtime as a writer" but added that Jody was "funny and lively and had wonderful insights into things."

Heaps wrote his first play two decades ago and has produced a half dozen of his works on his own dime. Several more productions were mounted by outsiders. Each of the productions was an Equity showcase with a limited-engagement run in a small theater.



Former Showtime producer Jody Heaps' play *Punchline* was KO'd by COVID-19.

"An Equity showcase costs between 12 and 15 thousand dollars to mount," Jody explains. "If I'm lucky, I get back three or four thousand of that. I do it because I love it. I love theater. I love the collaborative process. In boxing, everyone fights with everyone. In theater, people work together. In television, everyone picks apart what the writer writes. In theater, the play belongs to the writer."

That brings us to *Punchline*, Heaps' most recent creative endeavor.

The play begins with Jake Levenstein (a struggling writer-actor) doing a stand-up comedy gig in which the fictional Levenstein plays the role of Nathan Rossenkowski (a deceased fighter).

"So, I hear the ref counting 'four, five, six.' And I think to myself, 'What happened to one, two, three?'"

The one-liners continue.

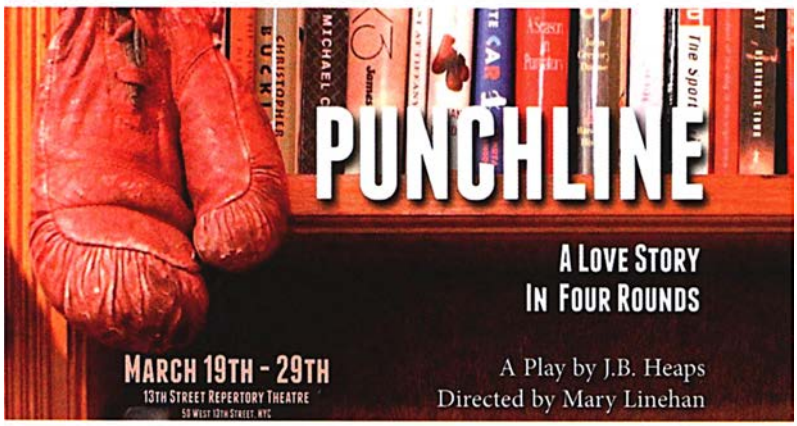
"Anyways, after that fight, I realized it was a whole lot safer dying on stage than in the ring. So I hang up my gloves and go into stand-up comedy."

Punchline then takes an intriguing turn when Rossenkowski's daughter appears in the audience. More unexpected turns follow. It's an entertaining journey.

The play was scheduled to run for 10 days at the 13th Street Repertory Theater in New York, starting on March 19.

Heaps was funding the production, which was to be directed by Mary Linehan with a cast that included Drew Valins, Moti Margolin, Victoria Meade and Nicholas Delany. Then the coronavirus intervened.

"The theater seats 60 people,"



Heaps says. "Crowds wouldn't have been a problem. But the virus shut down theater in New York. It was as simple as that. We were at the second-to-last rehearsal when the cancellation hit. That meant we were at a point where I'd paid for almost everything and couldn't get any of the money back. I lost about $10,000."

Heaps has seen fighters' dreams destroyed by an unexpected punch. This time, it happened to him. But like a fighter who rebounds from a knockout defeat, he hopes to mount a production of *Punchline* in the future.

RANDY ROBERTS was recognized this year by the Boxing Writers Association of America, which honored him with the A.J. Liebling Award for Outstanding Boxing Writing. Now Roberts has co-authored a book with Johnny Smith entitled *War Fever*.

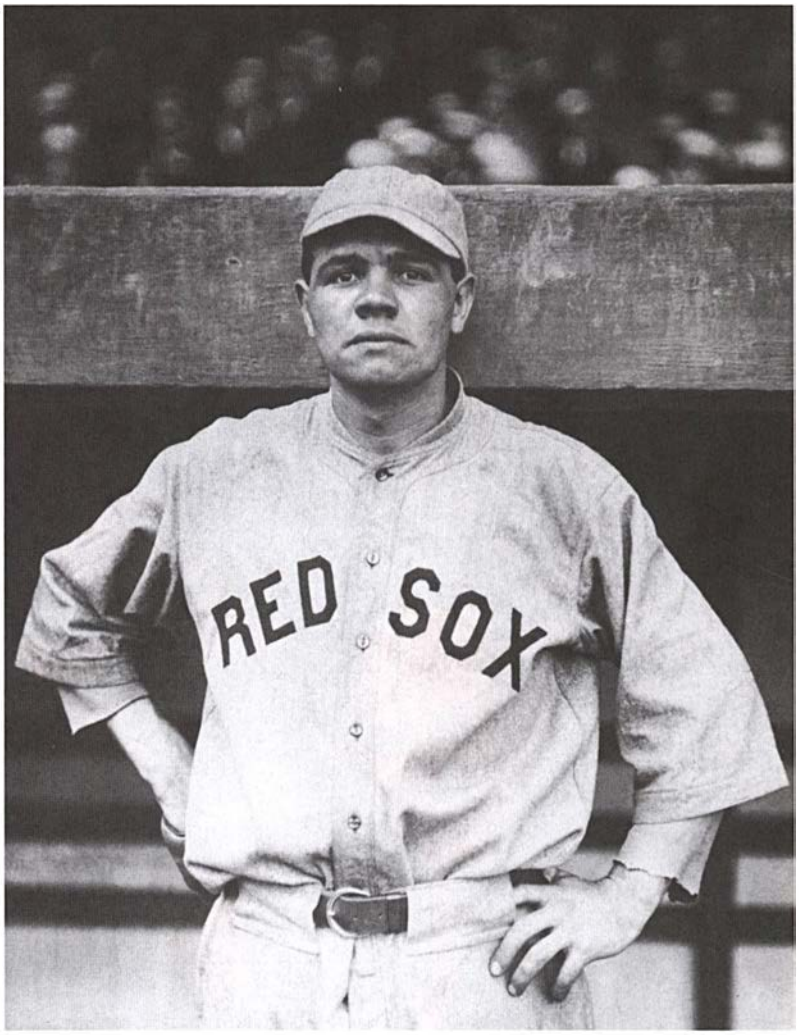
War Fever unfolds in Boston against the backdrop of the pandemic of 1918. It's told through the stories of three men: Charles Whittlesey (a Harvard-educated lawyer who became a national hero as the first Medal of Honor winner to emerge from "The Great War" against Germany), Karl Muck (the German-born conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra) and George Herman Ruth (the Boston Red Sox star pitcher who would become the greatest hitter in baseball history).

Ruth, then 23 years old, had been born into a German-American family and, on occasion, spoke German with friends. But he didn't do it publicly. And as the war raged, the moniker "George Herman" fell into disuse in favor of the more American-sounding "Babe."

What does all of this have to do with boxing?

First, *War Fever* draws some interesting parallels between Ruth and John L. Sullivan.

Sullivan was from Boston. In the 1880s, he was America's first mass-culture hero and the most idolized athlete who had lived up until that time. Writing about him, Roberts and Smith observe, "He was a perfect emblem of the boisterous aggressive nation that America had become – uninhibited, impulsive, and gregarious. He drank as hard as he fought and lived like there was no tomorrow. His power in the ring was legendary."



Baseball icon Babe Ruth is a central character in Randy Roberts' book *War Fever*.

That description also fits Ruth perfectly, as Roberts and Smith acknowledge: "Now, in Sullivan's city, Babe Ruth was exhibiting the same characteristics and tendencies. Although he had not yet achieved the same iconic status as John L. Sullivan, he stood on the precipice."

Also, consider Harry Frazee. Frazee promoted lucrative vaudeville tours featuring James Jeffries in 1909 and 1910 and played a key role in the promotion of Jack Johnson vs. Jess Willard in Havana in 1915. He bought the Red Sox after their 1916 World Series triumph. Two years later, they won the Series again.

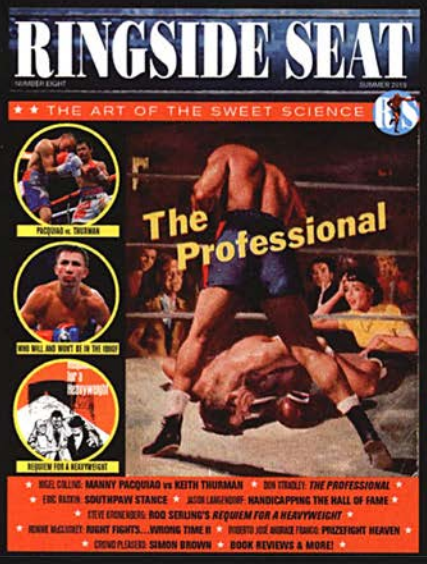
Then, strapped for cash after the 1919 season, Frazee sold Ruth to the New York Yankees for $100,000.

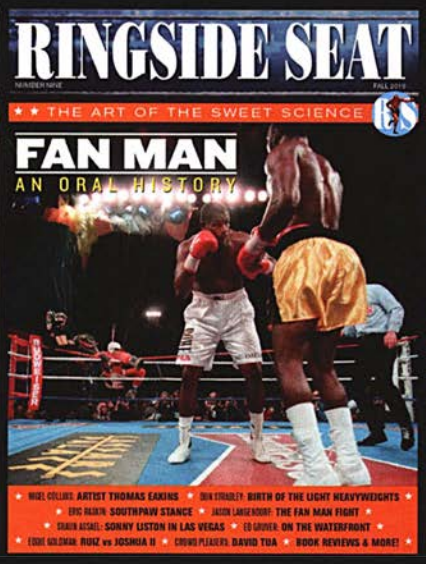
Red Sox fans wish that Frazee had stayed in theater and boxing.

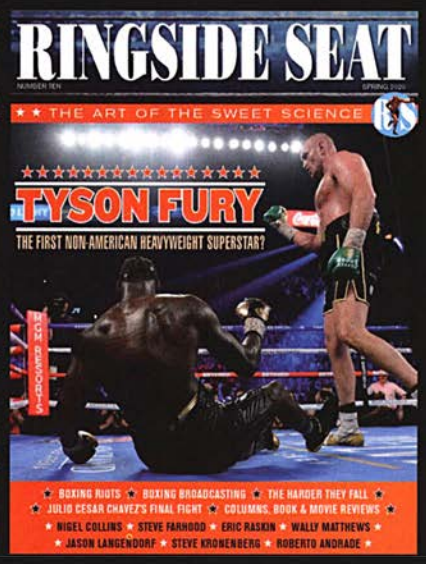
Thomas Hauser's email address is thomashauserwriter@gmail.com. His most recent book – A Dangerous Journey: Another Year Inside Boxing – *was published by the University of Arkansas Press. In 2004, the Boxing Writers Association of America honored Hauser with the Nat Fleischer Award for career excellence in boxing journalism. He will be inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame with the Class of 2020.*

RINGSIDE SEAT

★★ THE ART OF THE SWEET SCIENCE ★★







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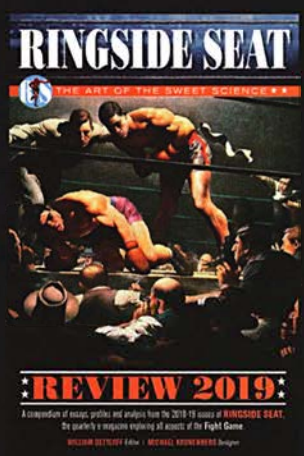

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THE FACE OF BOXING

PHOTOGRAPHS BY **WOJTEK URBANEK**
TEXT BY **THOMAS HAUSER**

JULIO CESAR CHAVEZ AND MAURICIO SULAIMAN

THE FATHER AND THE SON

TWO FATHER-AND-SON COMBINATIONS of Mexican heritage have had a particularly noteworthy impact on boxing.

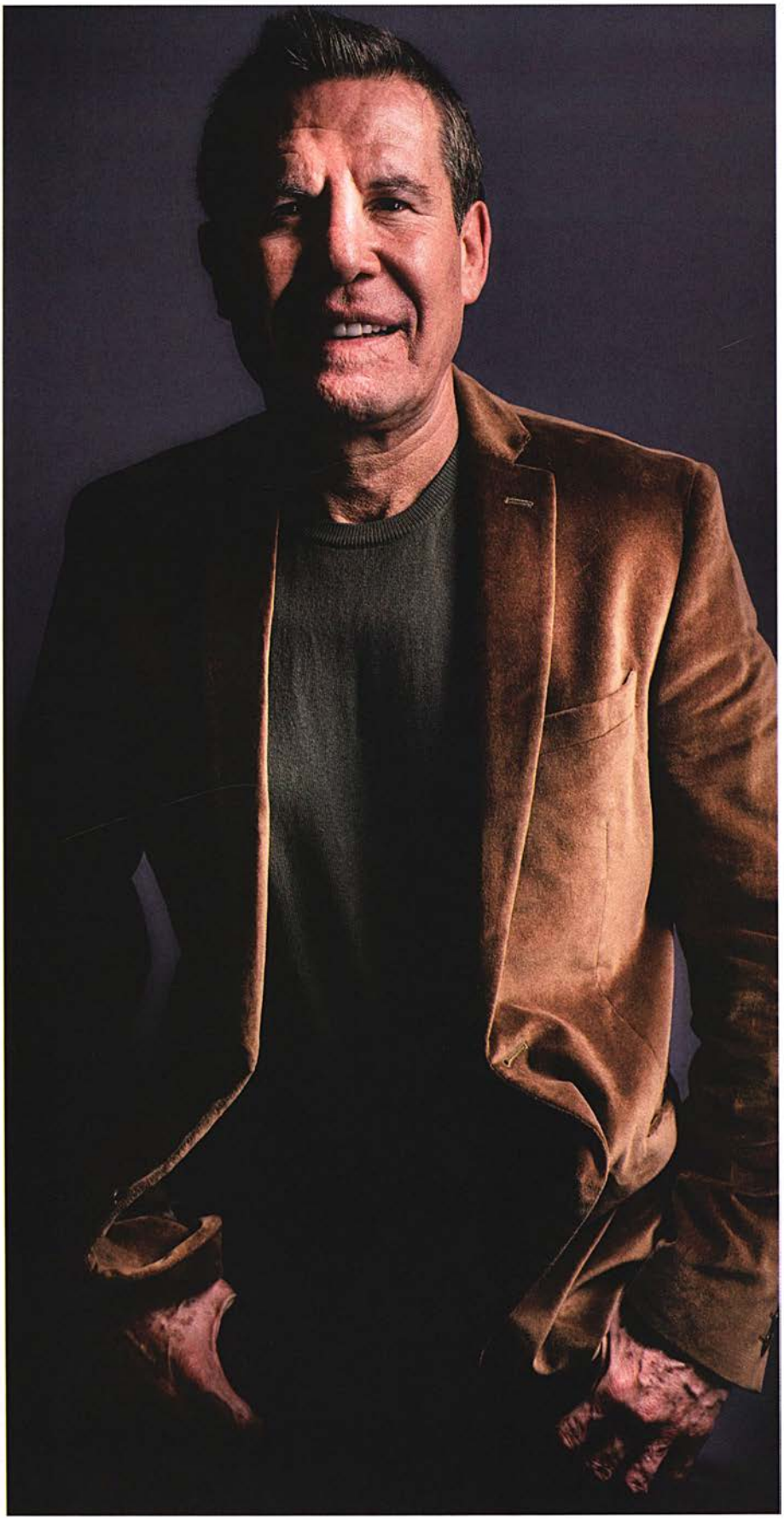
Julio Cesar Chavez is regarded by many as Mexico's greatest fighter and is an icon in his native land. During a glorious 25-year ring career that began in 1980, he amassed 107 victories with 85 knockouts against only six defeats and two draws. Five of these six losses came long after he had passed his prime.

Chavez reigned supreme for years at 130, 135, and 140 pounds. His victims included Roger Mayweather, Rocky Lockridge, Juan LaPorte, Edwin Rosario, Meldrick Taylor and Hector Camacho.

Chavez's son, Julio Jr., has had a less impressive ride. Junior's numbers are good: 51 wins, four losses and one draw with 33 KOs. But his career has been plagued by poor training habits and – worse in the eyes of his Mexican followers – an apparent lack of heart. On two occasions – against Andrzej Fonfara in 2015 and Daniel Jacobs in 2019 – he retired from the battle prematurely when the going got tough.

While Julio Jr. has been squandering his father's legacy, Mauricio Sulaiman has been building a legacy of his own.

Jose Sulaiman was born in Mexico in 1931 and elected president of the World Boxing Council in 1975. A consummate diplomat, he held that



position until his death 38 years later.

Sulaiman built the WBC into a global empire with 161 affiliated nations. His relationship with Don King and the performance of some WBC referees and judges (including several who worked Chavez Sr.'s fights against Meldrick Taylor and Pernell Whitaker) were criticized. But he implemented significant health reforms (such as reducing championship fights from 15 to 12 rounds) and took an active role in the fight against apartheid in South Africa.

Mauricio Sulaiman succeeded his father as WBC president. He reveres his father's memory and inherited his father's diplomatic skills. Like his father, he has both admirers and critics. Under his leadership, the WBC has remained the most powerful of boxing's four major sanctioning organizations. And in implementing the WBC Clean Boxing Program, he has taken a first step toward combatting the use of illegal performance-enhancing drugs in boxing.

Meanwhile, the Chavez-Sulaiman relationship has remained strong through two generations with Mexican pride and personal fondness as binding ties.

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RATINGS

Due to the COVID-19 shutdown, the Ring Ratings have been frozen until boxing resumes on a large scale. They reflect results through fights of April 18, 2020.

Vasiliy Lomachenko, No. 2 in the pound-for-pound rankings, will continue his quest to become undisputed lightweight champ once boxing resumes.

1 **CANELO ALVAREZ**
Mexico • 53-1-2 (36 KOs)

2 **VASILIY LOMACHENKO**
Ukraine • 14-1-0 (10 KOs)

3 **NAOYA INOUE**
Japan • 19-0-0 (16 KOs)

4 **TERENCE CRAWFORD**
U.S. • 36-0-0 (27 KOs)

5 **ALEKSANDR USYK**
Ukraine • 17-0-0 (13 KOs)

6 **ERROL SPENCE JR.**
U.S. • 26-0-0 (21 KOs)

7 **GENNADIY GOLOVKIN**
Kazakhstan • 40-1-1 (35 KOs)

8 **JUAN FRANCISCO ESTRADA**
Mexico • 40-3-0 (27 KOs)

9 **ARTUR BETERBIEV**
Russia • 15-0-0 (15 KOs)

10 **MANNY PACQUIAO**
Philippines • 62-7-2 (39 KOs)

HEAVYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT UNLIMITED

C **TYSON FURY** RING, WBC
U.K. • 30-0-1 (21 KOs)

1 **ANTHONY JOSHUA** IBF, WBA, WBO
U.K. • 23-1-0 (21 KOs)

2 **DILLIAN WHYTE**
U.K. • 27-1-0 (18 KOs)

3 **DEONTAY WILDER**
U.S. • 42-1-1 (41 KOs)

4 **LUIS ORTIZ**
Cuba • 31-2-0 (26 KOs)

5 **ANDY RUIZ JR.**
U.S. • 33-2-0 (22 KOs)

6 **ALEXANDER POVETKIN**
Russia • 35-2-1 (24 KOs)

7 **JOSEPH PARKER**
New Zealand • 27-2-0 (21 KOs)

8 **MICHAEL HUNTER**
U.S. • 18-1-1 (12 KOs)

9 **OSCAR RIVAS**
Colombia • 26-1-0 (18 KOs)

10 **KUBRAT PULEV**
Bulgaria • 28-1-0 (14 KOs)

CRUISERWEIGHTSS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 200 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**

1 **MAIRIS BRIEDIS**
Latvia • 26-1-0 (19 KOs)

2 **YUNIEL DORTICOS** IBF
Cuba • 24-1-0 (22 KOs)

3 **ILUNGA MAKABU** WBC
Congo • 27-2-0 (24 KOs)

4 **KRZYSZTOF GLOWACKI**
Poland • 31-2-0 (19 KOs)

5 **KEVIN LERENA**
S. Africa • 25-1-0 (12 KOs)

6 **ANDREW TABITI**
U.S. • 17-1-0 (13 KOs)

7 **LAWRENCE OKOLIE**
U.K. • 14-0-0 (11 KOs)

8 **ARSEN GOULAMIRIAN** WBA
France • 26-0-0 (18 KOs)

9 **THABISO MCHUNU**
S. Africa • 22-5-0 (13 KOs)

10 **MICHAL CIESLAK**
Poland • 19-1-0 (13 KOs)

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 175 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**

1 **ARTUR BETERBIEV** IBF, WBC
Russia • 15-0-0 (15 KOs)

2 **OLEKSANDR GVOZDYK**
Ukraine • 17-1-0 (14 KOs)

3 **DMITRY BIVOL** WBA
Russia • 17-0-0 (11 KOs)

4 **SERGEY KOVALEV**
Russia • 34-4-1 (29 KOs)

5 **ELEIDER ALVAREZ**
Colombia • 25-1-0 (13 KOs)

6 **JEAN PASCAL**
Canada • 35-6-1 (20 KOs)

7 **BADOU JACK**
Sweden • 22-3-3 (13 KOs)

8 **MARCUS BROWNE**
U.S. • 23-1-0 (16 KOs)

9 **JOE SMITH JR.**
U.S. • 25-3-0 (20 KOs)

10 **DOMINIC BOESEL**
Germany • 30-1-0 (12 KOs)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 168 POUNDS

C **CALLUM SMITH** RING, WBA
U.K. • 27-0-0 (19 KOs)

1 **DAVID BENAVIDEZ** WBC
U.S. • 22-0-0 (19 KOs)

2 **CALEB PLANT** IBF
U.S. • 20-0-0 (12 KOs)

3 **ANTHONY DIRRELL**
U.S. • 33-2-1 (24 KOs)

4 **CANELO ALVAREZ**
Mexico • 53-1-2 (36 KOs)

5 **BILLY JOE SAUNDERS** WBO
U.K. • 29-0-0 (14 KOs)

6 **CALEB TRUAX**
U.S. • 31-4-2 (19 KOs)

7 **JOHN RYDER**
U.K. • 28-5-0 (16 KOs)

8 **FEDOR CHUDINOV**
Russia • 22-2-0 (15 KOs)

9 **DAVID LEMIEUX**
Canada • 41-4-0 (34 KOs)

10 **DANIEL JACOBS**
U.S. • 36-3-0 (30 KOs)

RATINGS

Through fights of April 18, 2020

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 160 POUNDS

- **C** **CANELO ALVAREZ** RING, WBA — Mexico • 53-1-2 (36 KOs)
- **1** **GENNADIY GOLOVKIN** IBF — Kaz. • 40-1-1 (35 KOs)
- **2** **DEMETRIUS ANDRADE** WBO — U.S. • 29-0-0 (18 KOs)
- **3** **JERMALL CHARLO** WBC — U.S. • 30-0-0 (22 KOs)
- **4** **SERGIY DEREVYANCHENKO** — Ukraine • 13-2-0 (10 KOs)
- **5** **RYOTA MURATA** — Japan • 16-2-0 (13 KOs)
- **6** **KAMIL SZEREMETA** — Poland • 21-0-0 (5 KOs)
- **7** **CHRIS EUBANK JR.** — U.K. • 29-2-0 (22 KOs)
- **8** **MACIEJ SULECKI** — Poland • 28-2-0 (11 KOs)
- **9** **ROB BRANT** — U.S. • 25-2-0 (17 KOs)
- **10** **LIAM WILLIAMS** — U.K. • 22-2-1 (17 KOs)

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 154 POUNDS

- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **JERMELL CHARLO** WBC — U.S. • 33-1-0 (17 KOs)
- **2** **JEISON ROSARIO** IBF, WBA — Dom. Rep. • 20-1-1 (14 KOs)
- **3** **JULIAN WILLIAMS** — U.S. • 27-2-1 (16 KOs)
- **4** **JARRETT HURD** — U.S. • 24-1-0 (16 KOs)
- **5** **ERISLANDY LARA** — Cuba • 26-3-3 (15 KOs)
- **6** **BRIAN CASTANO** — Argentina • 16-0-1 (12 KOs)
- **7** **TONY HARRISON** — U.S. • 28-3-0 (21 KOs)
- **8** **MICHEL SORO** — France • 35-2-1 (24 KOs)
- **9** **ERICKSON LUBIN** — U.S. • 22-1-0 (16 KOs)
- **10** **PATRICK TEIXEIRA** WBO — Brazil • 31-1-0 (22 KOs)

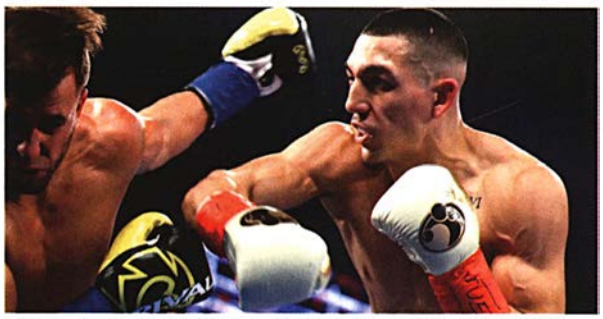
WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 147 POUNDS

- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **ERROL SPENCE JR.** IBF, WBC — U.S. • 26-0-0 (21 KOs)
- **2** **TERENCE CRAWFORD** WBO — U.S. • 36-0-0 (27 KOs)
- **3** **MANNY PACQUIAO** WBA — Phil. • 62-7-2 (39 KOs)
- **4** **KEITH THURMAN** — U.S. • 29-1-0 (22 KOs)
- **5** **SHAWN PORTER** — U.S. • 30-3-1 (17 KOs)
- **6** **DANNY GARCIA** — U.S. • 36-2-0 (21 KOs)
- **7** **YORDENIS UGAS** — Cuba • 25-4-0 (12 KOs)
- **8** **KUDRATILLO ABDUKAKHOROV** — Uzbekistan • 17-0-0 (9 KOs)
- **9** **SERGEY LIPINETS** — Russia • 16-1-0 (12 KOs)
- **10** **MIKEY GARCIA** — U.S. • 40-1-0 (30 KOs)

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 140 POUNDS

- **C** **JOSH TAYLOR** RING, IBF, WBA — U.K. • 16-0-0 (12 KOs)
- **1** **JOSE RAMIREZ** WBC, WBO — U.S. • 25-0-0 (17 KOs)
- **2** **REGIS PROGRAIS** — U.S. • 24-1-0 (20 KOs)
- **3** **IVAN BARANCHYK** — Russia • 20-1-0 (13 KOs)
- **4** **VIKTOR POSTOL** — Ukraine • 31-2-0 (12 KOs)
- **5** **KIRYL RELIKH** — Belarus • 23-3-0 (19 KOs)
- **6** **MAURICE HOOKER** — U.S. • 27-1-3 (18 KOs)
- **7** **JOSE ZEPEDA** — U.S. • 31-2-0 (25 KOs)
- **8** **MARIO BARRIOS** — U.S. • 25-0-0 (16 KOs)
- **9** **ARNOLD BARBOZA** — U.S. • 23-0-0 (10 KOs)
- **10** **BATYRZHAN JUKEMBAYEV** — Kazakhstan • 18-0-0 (14 KOs)

Terence Crawford, the undefeated WBO 147-pound titleholder, remains No. 2 in the welterweight rankings.



Teofimo Lopez, the No. 1-rated lightweight, is in line to challenge Ring champ Vasiliy Lomachenko.

LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 135 POUNDS

- **C** **VASILIY LOMACHENKO** RING, WBA, WBO — Ukraine • 14-1-0 (10 KOs)
- **1** **TEOFIMO LOPEZ** IBF — U.S. • 15-0-0 (12 KOs)
- **2** **DEVIN HANEY** — U.S. • 24-0-0 (15 KOs)
- **3** **RICHARD COMMEY** — Ghana • 29-3-0 (26 KOs)
- **4** **LUKE CAMPBELL** — U.K. • 20-3-0 (16 KOs)
- **5** **RYAN GARCIA** — U.S. • 20-0-0 (17 KOs)
- **6** **ROBERT EASTER** — U.S. • 22-1-1 (14 KOs)
- **7** **JAVIER FORTUNA** — Dom. Rep. • 35-2-1 (24 KOs)
- **8** **JORGE LINARES** — Venezuela • 47-5-0 (29 KOs)
- **9** **EMMANUEL TAGOE** — Ghana • 31-1-0 (15 KOs)
- **10** **RANCES BARTHELEMY** — Cuba • 27-1-1 (14 KOs)

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 130 POUNDS

- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **MIGUEL BERCHELT** WBC — Mexico • 37-1-0 (33 KOs)
- **2** **JOSEPH DIAZ JR.** IBF — U.S. • 31-1-0 (15 KOs)
- **3** **JAMEL HERRING** WBO — U.S. • 21-2-0 (10 KOs)
- **4** **TEVIN FARMER** — U.S. • 30-5-1 (6 KOs)
- **5** **RENE ALVARADO** — Nicaragua • 32-8-0 (21 KOs)
- **6** **MASAYUKI ITO** — Japan • 26-2-1 (14 KOs)
- **7** **ANDREW CANCIO** — U.S. • 21-5-2 (16 KOs)
- **8** **MIGUEL ROMAN** — Mexico • 62-13-0 (47 KOs)
- **9** **SHAVKATDZHON RAKHIMOV** — Russia • 15-0-0 (12 KOs)
- **10** **CHRIS COLBERT** — U.S. • 14-0-0 (5 KOs)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 126 POUNDS

- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **JOSH WARRINGTON** IBF — U.K. • 30-0-0 (7 KOs)
- **2** **GARY RUSSELL JR.** WBC — U.S. • 31-1-0 (18 KOs)
- **3** **XU CAN** WBA — China • 18-2-0 (3 KOs)
- **4** **SHAKUR STEVENSON** WBO — U.S. • 13-0-0 (7 KOs)
- **5** **KID GALAHAD** — U.K. • 27-1-0 (16 KOs)
- **6** **MARK MAGSAYO** — Phil. • 20-0-0 (14 KOs)
- **7** **TUGSTSOGT NYAMBAYAR** — Mongolia • 11-1-0 (9 KOs)
- **8** **RUBEN VILLA** — U.S. • 18-0-0 (5 KOs)
- **9** **JESSIE MAGDALENO** — U.S. • 27-1-0 (18 KOs)
- **10** **MIGUEL MARRIAGA** — Colombia • 29-3-0 (25 KOs)

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 122 POUNDS

- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **REY VARGAS** WBC — Mexico • 34-0-0 (22 KOs)
- **2** **EMANUEL NAVARRETE** WBO — Mexico • 31-1-0 (27 KOs)
- **3** **MURODJON AKHMADALIEV** IBF, WBA — Uzbekistan • 8-0-0 (6 KOs)
- **4** **DANIEL ROMAN** — U.S. • 27-3-1 (10 KOs)
- **5** **RYOSUKE IWASA** — Japan • 27-3-0 (17 KOs)
- **6** **BRANDON FIGUEROA** — U.S. • 20-0-1 (15 KOs)
- **7** **TOMOKI KAMEDA** — Japan • 36-3-0 (20 KOs)
- **8** **HIROAKI TESHIGAWARA** — Japan • 21-2-2 (14 KOs)
- **9** **AZAT HOVHANNISYAN** — Armenia • 18-3-0 (15 KOs)
- **10** **STEPHEN FULTON** — U.S. • 18-0-0 (8 KOs)

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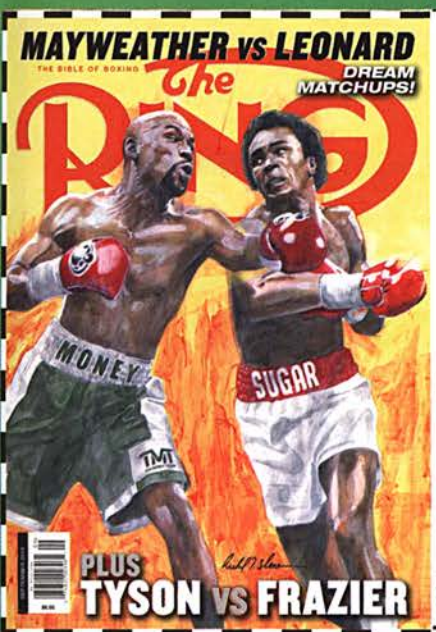

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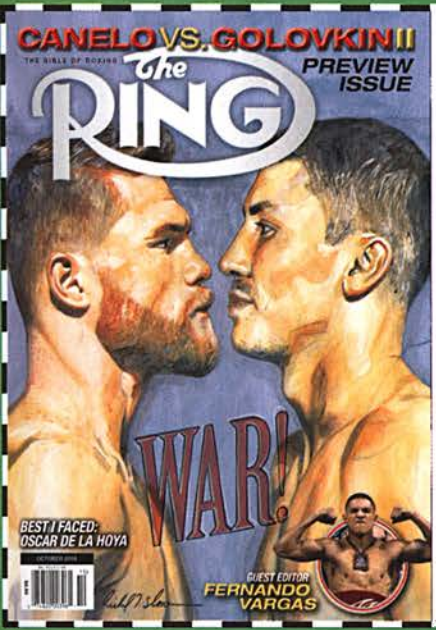

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RATINGS

Through fights of April 18, 2020

BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 118 POUNDS

- **C** **NAOYA INOUE** RING, IBF, WBA
  Japan • 19-0-0 (16 KOs)
- **1** **NONITO DONAIRE**
  Phil. • 40-6-0 (26 KOs)
- **2** **NORDINE OUBAALI** WBC
  France • 17-0-0 (12 KOs)
- **3** **JOHN RIEL CASIMERO** WBO
  Philippines • 29-4–0 (20 KOs)
- **4** **EMMANUEL RODRIGUEZ**
  P.R. • 19-1-0 (12 KOs)
- **5** **ZOLANI TETE**
  S. Africa • 28-4-0 (21 KOs)
- **6** **JASON MOLONEY**
  Australia • 20-1-0 (17 KOs)
- **7** **JOSHUA GREER**
  U.S. • 22-1-1 (12 KOs)
- **8** **TAKUMA INOUE**
  Japan • 13-1-0 (3 KOs)
- **9** **GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX**
  Cuba • 20-1-0 (13 KOs)
- **10** **OSCAR NEGRETE**
  U.S. • 19-2-2 (7 KOs)

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 115 POUNDS

- **C** **JUAN FRANCISCO ESTRADA** RING, WBC
  Mexico • 40-3-0 (27 KOs)
- **1** **SRISAKET SOR RUNGVISAI**
  Thailand • 47-5-1 (41 KOs)
- **2** **ROMAN GONZALEZ** WBA
  Nicaragua • 49-2-0 (41 KOs)
- **3** **KAZUTO IOKA** WBO
  Japan • 25-2-0 (14 KOs)
- **4** **JERWIN ANCAJAS** IBF
  Phil. • 32-1-2 (22 KOs)
- **5** **KHALID YAFAI**
  U.K. • 26-1-0 (15 KOs)
- **6** **ANDREW MOLONEY**
  Australia • 21-0-0 (14 KOs)
- **7** **FRANCISCO RODRIGUEZ JR.**
  Mexico • 33-4-1 (24 KOs)
- **8** **JEYVIER CINTRON**
  P.R. • 11-1-0 (5 KOs)
- **9** **CARLOS CUADRAS**
  Mexico • 39-3-1 (27 KOs)
- **10** **JOSHUA FRANCO**
  U.S. • 16-1-2 (8 KOs)

FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 112 POUNDS

- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **KOSEI TANAKA**
  Japan • 15-0-0 (9 KOs)
- **2** **MORUTI MTHALANE** IBF
  S. Africa • 39-2-0 (26 KOs)
- **3** **JULIO CESAR MARTINEZ** WBC
  Mexico • 16-1-0 (12 KOs)
- **4** **ARTEM DALAKIAN** WBA
  Ukraine • 20-0-0 (14 KOs)
- **5** **CHARLIE EDWARDS**
  U.K. • 15-1-0 (6 KOs)
- **6** **ANDREW SELBY**
  U.K. • 13-1-0 (7 KOs)
- **7** **MASAYUKI KURODA**
  Japan • 30-8-3 (16 KOs)
- **8** **JUNTO NAKATANI**
  Japan • 20-0-0 (15 KOs)
- **9** **CRISTOFER ROSALES**
  Nicaragua • 29-5-0 (20 KOs)
- **10** **GIEMEL MAGRAMO**
  Phil. • 24-1-0 (20 KOs)

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 108 POUNDS

- **C** **HIROTO KYOGUCHI** RING, WBA
  Japan • 14-0-0 (9 KOs)
- **1** **KENSHIRO TERAJI** WBC
  Japan • 17-0-0 (10 KOs)
- **2** **HEKKIE BUDLER**
  S. Africa • 32-4-0 (10 KOs)
- **3** **CARLOS CANIZALES**
  Venezuela • 22-0-1 (17 KOs)
- **4** **FELIX ALVARADO** IBF
  Nicaragua • 35-2-0 (30 KOs)
- **5** **ELWIN SOTO** WBO
  Mexico • 17-1-0 (12 KOs)
- **6** **TETSUYA HISADA**
  Japan • 34-10-2 (20 KOs)
- **7** **EDWARD HENO**
  Phil. • 14-1-5 (5 KOs)
- **8** **SHO KIMURA**
  Japan • 19-3-2 (12 KOs)
- **9** **DANIEL MATELLON**
  Cuba • 11-0-2 (6 KOs)
- **10** **AGUSTIN GAUTO**
  Argentina • 15-0-0 (10 KOs)

The resurgent Roman Gonzalez is rated No. 2 among the best of the deep 115-pound division.

Ring junior flyweight champ Hiroto Kyoguchi sits atop one of the most competitive weight classes.

STRAWWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 105 POUNDS

- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **WANHENG MENAYOTHIN** WBC
  Thailand • 54-0-0 (18 KOs)
- **2** **KNOCKOUT CP FRESHMART** WBA
  Thailand • 21-0-0 (7 KOs)
- **3** **WILFREDO MENDEZ** WBO
  Puerto Rico • 16-1-0 (6 KOs)
- **4** **BYRON ROJAS**
  Nicaragua • 27-4-3 (11 KOs)
- **5** **VIC SALUDAR**
  Phil. • 20-4-0 (11 KOs)
- **6** **JOSE ARGUMEDO**
  Mexico • 23-4-1 (14 KOs)
- **7** **SIMPIWE KONKCO**
  S. Africa • 19-6-0 (7 KOs)
- **8** **PEDRO TADURAN** IBF
  Phil. • 14-2-1 (11 KOs)
- **9** **DANIEL VALLADARES**
  Mexico • 22-1-1 (13 KOs)
- **10** **MELVIN JERUSALEM**
  Phil. • 15-2-0 (9 KOs)

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RECORDS PROVIDED BY BOXREC.COM

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A champion can lose his belt in six situations: 1. The Champion loses a fight in the weight class in which he is champion; 2. The Champion moves to another weight class; 3. The Champion does not schedule a fight in any weight class for 18 months, although injuries and certain other unforeseen circumstances could be taken into consideration; 4. The Champion does not schedule a fight at his championship weight for 18 months (even if he fights at another weight); 5. The Champion does not schedule a fight with a Top-5 contender from any weight class for two years; 6. The Champion retires.

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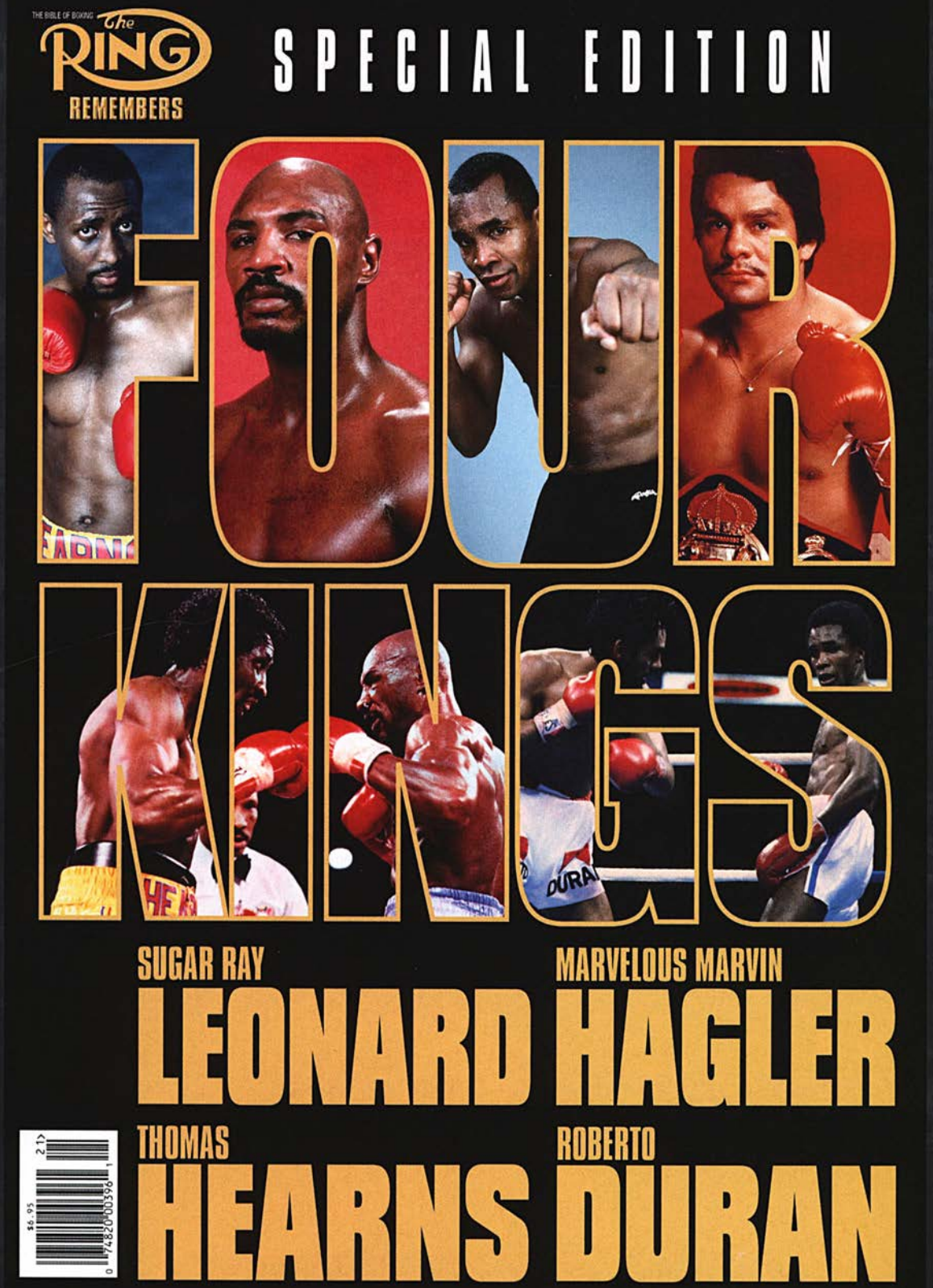

SPECIAL EDITIONS • BACK ISSUES • APPAREL

SKYDIVING WITHOUT A PARACHUTE

ARTURO GATTI AND MICKY WARD ELEVATED RISK-TAKING TO ANOTHER LEVEL EACH TIME THEY FOUGHT EACH OTHER, AND THEIR SACRIFICE WAS BOXING'S BOON

By **Nigel Collins**

"To know what life is worth you have to risk it once in a while."

– Jean-Paul Sartre

AL BELLO

An uncle of a high school friend was a daredevil called Johnny Blackjack. That wasn't his real name of course; it was the name he used when he rode a motorcycle on the Wall of Death at carnivals, competed in barrel-jumping contests and drag races. He died trying to drive a dragster powered by an Allison aircraft engine.

I think of Blackjack sometimes when I watch boxers pounding away at each other's head with wild abandon. You see, when they found Uncle Johnny's helmet, what was assumed to be part of his head was still inside, transformed into what looked like barbecued Jell-O.

Blackjack crossed my mind more than a few times covering the magnificent Arturo Gatti-Micky Ward trilogy. All boxers are members in good standing of the daredevil club, but these two guys are the type of fighters Johnny would have been, had he picked up the gloves instead of a crash helmet.

The style in which a boxer fights is more about who he is than what he can do. Gatti and Ward were both punchers at heart, but more than that they were extreme risk-takers, fighters willing to push themselves past the point of no return.

All boxers are at least a little crazy or they wouldn't be boxers. That's a given. But what Gatti and Ward did

Referee Frank Cappuccino rarely got between Gatti and Ward during their first slugfest on May 18, 2002.

ED MULHOLLAND

was punch themselves into another dimension where nothing mattered but the fight. The combatants are not really in control after a certain point; the fight itself takes on a life of its own.

You have to wonder what sort of person gleefully swaps punches with little or no regard for their personal safety. Every man or woman who steps into a boxing ring is brave, even the least among them, but fighters like Ward and Gatti go beyond bravery and into a frenzy bordering on insanity.

Studies have found that most high risk-takers have similar personality traits related to sensation-seeking, aggression and sociability. However, while Gatti and Ward became great friends, outside of a boxing context their personalities were as different as the old, 2,000-seat Sunnyside Garden in Queens and T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas.

Gatti behaved like a hell-raising teenager, full of pranks and living life as recklessly as he fought. He once turned up at a post-fight party dripping blood from an eye cut. To hell with the hospital, Arturo wanted to party. He drank more than he should, hung out at strip clubs and was embroiled in a couple of alcohol-fueled incidents involving the police. But you couldn't help but love him.

At a private photo shoot a few days before one of his fights in Atlantic City, Gatti regaled a small group of people in the room with the story of how he got the scar on his back. It was in a street fight over a woman and the other guy had a knife. Arturo demonstrated how he ducked under his foe's attempt to slash his face and came up with a punch that knocked the man cold. Unfortunately, Gatti didn't duck quite low enough and suffered a gash on his back.

It's difficult to imagine the phlegmatic Ward getting into a street fight over a woman. When asked if his family was as wacky as portrayed in his biopic, *The Fighter*, he laughed and said they were actually worse. Micky is the most levelheaded of the bunch. He's as blue collar as it gets, the kind of man who worked on a road-paving crew while waiting for his hand to heal following a boxing-related injury.

Ward wasn't always a stalker looking to land the left hook to the liver. Well into his career, he had one of those "click moments" that changed everything.

"The funny thing is, if you look at tapes of me when I was younger, I was more of a dancer," wrote Ward in his autobiography, *The Warrior's Heart*. "I didn't become the fighter people recognize today until I was in my late 20s, early 30s. For the

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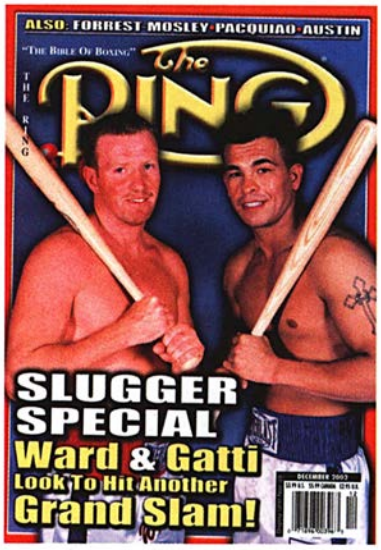
longest time I didn't have confidence that I could take a punch, and when I realized I could, everything changed. That cut to the core of being a fighter: When you stand in there and get hit, and you don't go down, and you don't get your brain scrambled, it's an amazing feeling."

Some things stick in your memory forever, like hitting your first home run in Little League. Ward-Gatti I, May 18, 2002, at Mohegan Sun in Uncasville, Connecticut, was another. A damn good fight was expected going in, but what we got was a masterpiece.

Something happened after the fight I have never experienced before or since. When the post-fight press conference was over, quite a few of the writers wandered back into the empty arena and hung around the ring. It was as if they were reluctant to leave the site of the miraculous event they had witnessed and wanted to linger in the euphoria that had cast a spell over even the most cynical amongst us.

"It's humbling to watch something like that," said HBO analyst Larry Merchant. "They give so much of



themselves, it's as if they're skydiving without a parachute."

Ward's 10-round majority decision victory was the highlight of his career and led to two more lucrative bouts with the man they called "The Human Highlight Reel." The second and third fights were at Atlantic City's Boardwalk Hall, which has twice as many seats as the Mohegan Sun.

The cover concept for the issue of The Ring previewing the second fight was the result of a last-minute brainwave by photographer Tom Casino – both Ward and Gatti were sluggers, so why not pose them with Louisville Slugger baseball bats over their shoulders? Everybody thought it was a good idea, and managing editor Eric Raskin dashed off to the nearest sporting goods store to buy the bats. It turned out to be more than just a cover photo when the image was reproduced on T-shirts.

Gatti won the second and third fights by 10-round unanimous decision. The second, held six months after the first, was outstanding but not as good as the first. The rubber match, held on June 7, 2003, was, however, another mindblower, and like the first, the third bout was selected as The Ring's Fight of the Year.

Ward, who was guaranteed $750,000 for the third Gatti fight, was already beginning to feel the effect of his career, so he retired. Gatti fought on, winning the vacant WBC junior welterweight title with a 12-round unanimous decision over the previously undefeated Gianluca Branco. He made two successful defenses, but by then his body had had enough, even if Arturo hadn't. He was stopped in three of his final four bouts,

AL BELLO

Gatti and Ward unleashed a torrent of damaging punches during their Fight of the Year rubber match.

the last of which came in July 2007.

Gatti played a prominent role in keeping big-time boxing alive in Atlantic City. The second Ward fight was the first of nine straight appearances in the saltwater taffy capital of the world. The atmosphere inside the Boardwalk Hall when Gatti fought was incredible, and when he made his ring walk the noise reverberated through your body as if you were a human tuning fork.

"It is fair to say that we promoted nine sellouts in a row with Arturo in Atlantic City," said Kathy Duva, CEO of Main Events. "Ticket prices varied depending on the level of opposition. So while the dollar figure for each gate was different, to the best of my recollection, we sold every ticket every time. It was a remarkable run. And we all had so much fun. I will never forget it. The excitement of that time was so exhilarating. It is and will always be among the highlights of my life."

Boxing rarely provides a happy ending, and so it was for Gatti and Ward. Gatti died, July 11, 2009, under mysterious circumstances while on holiday with his wife, Amanda Rodrigues, in Ipojuca, a seaside resort in Brazil. His legend lives on in the hearts of boxing fans and a plaque on the wall at the International Boxing Hall of Fame, where he was posthumously inducted in 2013.

Ward, who still lives in his hometown of Lowell, Massachusetts, suffers from chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE), the consequence of taking so many blows to the head.

"The stuff I go through every day, worrying about if I'm going to get a headache and how bad it's going to be, kind of like, consumes you," Ward told the Boston Herald. "It's terrible. It makes you nauseous. It's like a thump in the back of my head. You just feel drained all day."

Ward, 54, has pledged to donate his brain to Boston University upon his death, for research purposes. Hopefully, it will be in better condition than Johnny Blackjack's. Micky is a treasure.

Taken as a whole, the melodrama that was the Gatti-Ward trilogy could very well have provided fodder for Euripides, Sophocles and their brethren, the guys who left the toga parties long enough to write the Greek tragedies. Surely Shakespeare could do it justice. How about an opera?

There was something grand about it, something beyond three great fights. It was boxing's version of a passion play, complete with suffering and sacrifice. There will be no resurrection for the boxers, just for the sport they loved.

MICKY WARD THE LOST YEARS

BEFORE HIS CAREER RESURGENCE, MICKY WARD OVERCAME SELF-DOUBT WHILE TOILING IN OBSCURITY

By Don Stradley

BY THE WINTER OF 1991, just a few months after fighting in a glitzy Atlantic City resort, George Michael "Micky" Ward Jr. had hit bottom. Along with losing four fights in a row, he had managerial problems, a hand that needed surgery and a wayward half-brother troubled by addictions and a growing police record. The troubles piled up on Ward until he was content to fade into the gloom of his old neighborhood. It was the most damning sort of self-imposed exile, for torpedo bombers flying over the Bermuda Triangle in 1945 didn't vanish with more finality than did once-promising fighters disappear into the shadows of Lowell, Massachusetts.

The city was known as a working-class environment leveled by drugs. The nadir was captured in a 1995 episode of HBO's *America Undercover*. Called "High on Crack Street: Lost Lives in Lowell," the program followed three local crack addicts on a tragic downward spiral, one of them being a former fighter and Ward's half-brother, Dick Eklund. Ward disapproved of the show's relentlessly grim atmosphere, as did many Lowell residents. Their city, after all, was the birthplace of Jack Kerouac, Bette Davis and James Whistler; had served as the headquarters of Wang Laboratories; and remains the home of UMass Lowell and the New England Quilt Museum. Lowell's reputation has been restored somewhat in recent years, but there's still a drug presence, plus the permanent stench from the highly polluted Merrimack River. Locals may not notice it, but to an outsider, it's as if you step off the commuter train out of Boston and Lowell spits in your face.

Still, even at its most dire, Lowell maintained a reputation as a boxing center. The city had been producing fighters for decades before Ward, including a pair of tough journeymen, Larry Carney and Beau Jaynes, who had married into the Ward-Eklund family. Then there was 1970s heavyweight slugger Doug Kirk, whose career highlight was a public sparring session with Muhammad Ali. The early hype on Kirk was that he was another Marciano – The Ring picked him as Prospect of the Month for the June 1972 issue – but after five consecutive losses by knockout, Kirk

Micky Ward earned a minor intercontinental title with his ninth-round stoppage of Louis Veader.

The streets of Lowell, Massachusetts, swallowed the careers of many promising boxers. Ward wasn't one of them.

was never heard from again. Ward, as marketable as Irish whiskey, was part of a mid-1980s New England boxing renaissance that included Vinny Pazienza of Rhode Island, Marlon Starling of Connecticut, Ireland transplant Stevie Collins out of the Boston area and Maine's Joey Gamache. But despite being the young darling of Top Rank Inc. and receiving *buku* coverage on ESPN, Ward's confidence eroded. After an embarrassingly one-sided 10-round decision loss to Ricky Meyers, Ward followed Kirk, Eklund and so many other Lowell pugs into obscurity.

He stayed out of boxing and tended to personal issues, including a horrific job-site accident where a metal pole nearly split him in half. By the time Ward returned to the ring, he was such a forgotten figure that his comeback fights were carried out with minimal fanfare, even in his hometown.

Then again, maybe he wanted it that way.

"Here's the thing about being a local hero," Ward wrote in his memoir, *A Warrior's Heart*. "Half the people who shake your hand on a daily basis? They want you to lose. I know that."

During his three-year sabbatical, Ward had been content to work at his road-paving job and ignore boxing. He hadn't merely looked bad in those four losses. He looked as if he'd forgotten how to fight. When opponents took control, Ward seemed to shrivel up, covering his head with his gloves and letting the other guy pepper him. Such a scene is impossible to imagine if you remember Ward only from his later career, but during that losing streak he'd become the proverbial walking tomato can, fighting just hard enough to lose. "For those who have known Ward since his amateur days in Lowell," reported the Boston Globe during that period, "it is a sad story."

Well into his "retirement," Ward felt he had something to prove. He informed local promoter John Gagliardi that he wanted to fight again. The vibrant "Johnny Gags" offered him 400 bucks to fight Luis Castillo, a 32-year-old New Yorker who had lost 10 of his last 12 fights. Ward didn't care about the money or the opponent. He just wanted to see if he had anything left. On June 17, 1994, before a tiny audience at the Sheraton Inn in Lowell, Ward stopped Castillo in the fifth. It was the first time he'd been called a winner in more than four years.

And so it began, Micky Ward's comeback.

His next stop was the Lowell Auditorium, an elegant old hall known for hosting second-tier rock bands, Frank Sinatra tribute acts and the annual New England Golden Gloves. Killer Kowalski wrestled there a few times back in the 1970s, biting opponents on the forehead and gouging eyes. Ward fought there early in his career, and in September of 1994 he stopped Genaro Andujar in three. It was another easy night that

Unbeaten prospect Alfonso Sanchez seemed on his way to snapping Ward's comeback streak in 1997.

proved nothing. Ward had simply beaten a guy who'd been KO'd three weeks earlier by Darryl Tyson.

Just as Ward was recommitting himself to boxing, Johnny Gags was imprisoned for his part in an airport drug ring. Ward assumed he was a free agent once Gags was sentenced, since they'd had little more than a handshake deal. "You might think that," he wrote in his memoir, "if you knew nothing about boxing." It took nearly a year for Ward to wiggle loose from Gags' control.

Ward didn't fight again until December 30, 1995, on the undercard of a ridiculous boxing program at the Wonderland Greyhound Park in Revere, one of the few Massachusetts cities that could upstage Lowell as far as drug problems and dodgy characters. No one expected to see an exceptional night of boxing at the Revere dog track. The fights were staged as a sort of floor show opposite the betting windows, giving bettors something to look at while they waited in line. The man behind it was Al Valenti, a Boston promoter who had helmed most of Peter McNeeley's early fights. Valenti convinced Ward that dog track boxing was the next big thing and booked him into a night of semi-known fighters matched against paid bleeders. Key example: One of the bouts featured a slightly faded Aaron "Superman" Davis against a chap named Greg Cadiz. Davis was 41-4 and Cadiz was 4-41-2. Ward's opponent, Edgardo Rosario, had never fought professionally. Ward stopped him in one round. Ward didn't even get the $400 promised because his new promoter wrote him a bad check.

Ward collected two more easy wins at Wonderland but still didn't know if he could compete at a higher level. His dream at the time hinged on the growing fame of Dana Rosenblatt, another New England fighter who was being groomed by Ward's old promoter, Bob Arum. Ward wanted to fight on one of Rosenblatt's undercards but remained in limbo. He envisioned a bleak future of fighting in Revere, where boxers sometimes helped set up the ring. If things got too depressing, he thought, he could stick to paving roads. He still had keys to the roller.

Ward's break came in April of 1996. Top Rank put together an ESPN showcase for Rosenblatt at Boston's TD Garden (then known as FleetCenter), pitting him against an over-the-hill Howard Davis Jr. for a minor middleweight belt. Rosenblatt won easily, but the real talk of the night was Ward's performance against Rhode Island's undefeated Louis "The Viper" Veader. Ward was probably considered an easy opponent who would provide for Veader what Davis had for Rosenblatt: a nice name for the resume. But things turned out differently. Ward endured some tough rounds but stopped Veader in the ninth. With Eklund in prison on various charges, and even Ward's father serving time for running scams

Ward's signature left hook to the body abruptly halted Sanchez on the Whitaker-De La Hoya undercard.

on the elderly, the victory gave the Ward clan some uplift. "I paid my dues," Ward told the Globe.

After beating Veader a second time, Ward was scheduled to fight Julio Cesar Chavez, who by 1996 was a washed-out version of his old self. This sounded enticing, but it wasn't to be. Chavez bowed out with an injury, leaving Ward to fight a quick replacement, the unheralded Manny Castillo. It was a disaster. Ward was not only paid considerably less than he would've made with Chavez, but he came out of the first round with a ruptured tendon in his left thumb. Without use of his left hook, he could only scrape his way to a split decision win. On a Top Rank show featuring such stars as James Toney, Raul Marquez and Butterbean, Ward failed to stand out.

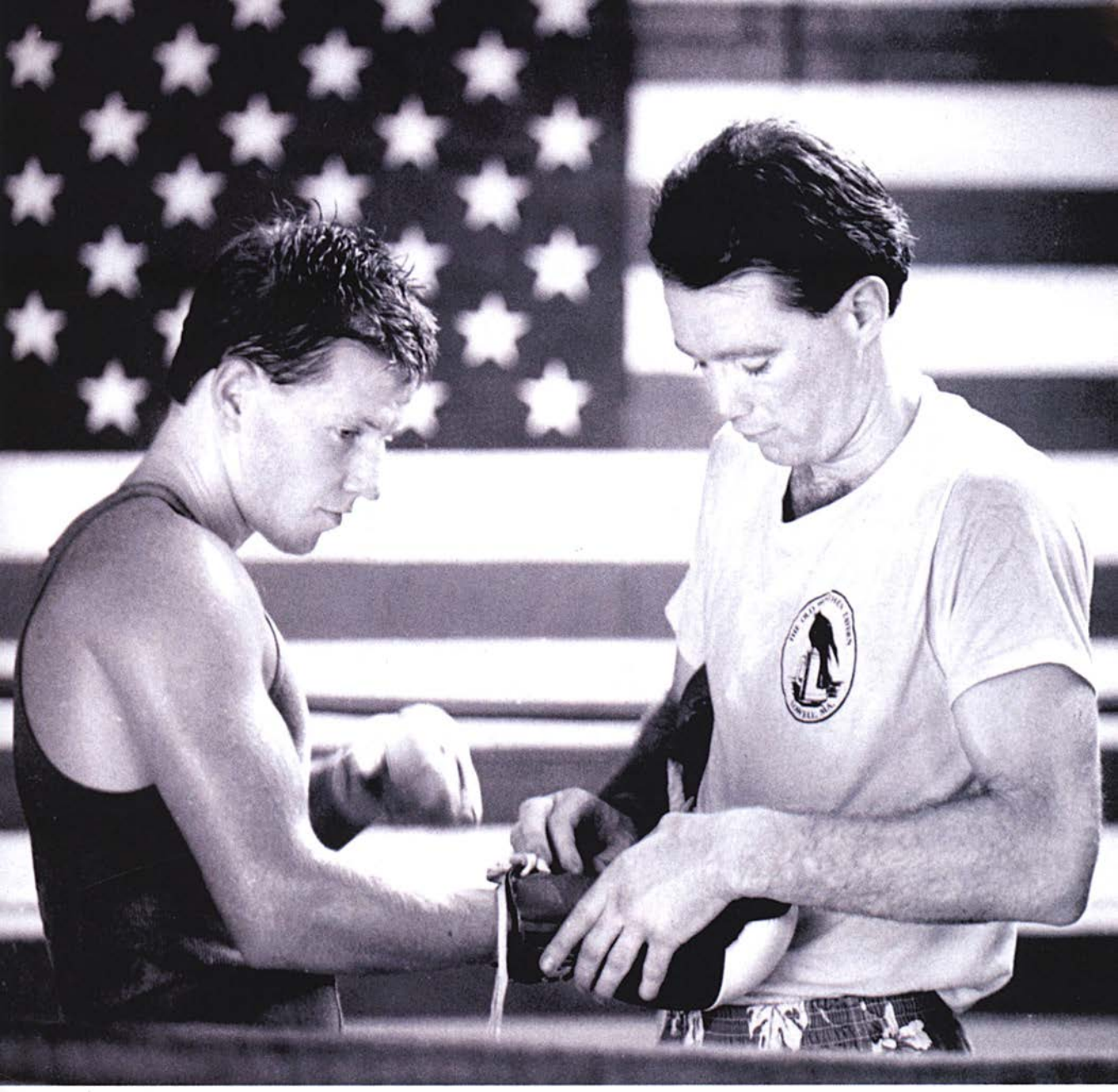
Still, Ward got the call in 1997 when Arum planned a major pay-per-view event featuring Oscar De La Hoya against Pernell Whitaker. The TVKO broadcast would begin with Ward against an undefeated Mexican slugger, Alfonso Sanchez. Because of De La Hoya's popularity, Ward would be seen by more people than usual, likely the most since he fought on the Hagler-Leonard undercard 10 years earlier.

And he nearly blew it.

Concerned about Sanchez's power, Ward's camp advised him to be cautious. Ward interpreted this order in the most exaggerated way, spending the early rounds at a comical distance from Sanchez. Larry Merchant, Jim Lampley and Roy Jones Jr. sat smugly at ringside, cracking sarcastic jokes about Ward, mocking his reluctance to fight. "I'd want my money back," Jones said, commiserating with the home viewers. When Sanchez dropped Ward with an uppercut in Round 5, it seemed the comeback was going to end badly, with many people watching. This wasn't the Sheraton in Lowell. It was the Thomas & Mack Center in Las Vegas, with HBO commentators making snide comments. Merchant called him a desperate fighter who had taken the bout for money and was being humiliated. The contest was, Merchant said, "one of the saddest kinds of fights in boxing."

Then in Round 7, Ward landed a left to the liver that put Sanchez on the canvas. Sanchez took a 10-count on his knees, hunched over like a man puking into a bucket.

"Was that a lucky punch, or did



Dick Eklund's boxing career was lost to the streets, but he was part of Ward's resurgence.

Micky just make idiots of us all?" said Lampley.

Luck had little to do with Ward's career, but the Sanchez bout could be taken as a microcosm of his entire existence. Written off and disrespected, he turned it all around with a single blow. "Good things happen if you keep throwing punches," Ward liked to say.

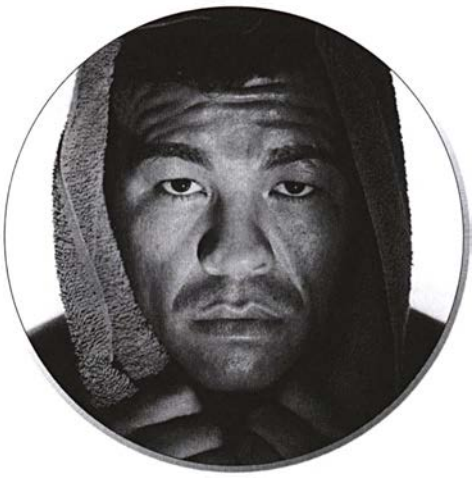
You know the rest of the story. He won some fights. He lost some fights. He became a beloved boxing character, inspiring books and a movie. By the end of his career, he was in the million-dollars-per-fight bracket. It was all a bit unlikely, and no stranger aspect of it was the sight of Eklund, who just some years earlier had been one of Lowell's lost denizens, in Ward's corner.

"I could've been close to the championship of the world," said Eklund in "High on Crack Street," "if I lived the right life." Though Eklund received some notoriety from the documentary, the footage is now doubly interesting for the quick glimpse it provides of Ward in his wilderness years. It happens when the film crew follows Eklund to what is most likely Ward's first comeback bout. We see Ward getting his hands wrapped under the fluorescent lights of a hotel room, probably the Sheraton. The fight itself is pitiful; at one point Ward accidentally hits the referee. When Ward is later declared the winner of the contest, he seems distracted. The people in his circle appear edgy, desperate as rattlesnakes in a pit. Watch that brief clip of Ward trying to reclaim his career, observe the chaos around him, and you realize he had more to overcome than just a promoter who moonlighted as a drug trafficker, or Lowell's rancid air.

BEYOND THE TRILOGY
ARTURO GATTI

EVEN WHEN HE WASN'T FIGHTING WARD, AUDIENCES COULD COUNT ON A BLEEDING, SWOLLEN GATTI GIVING EVERYTHING HE HAD IN THE RING

By Dan Rafael



ARTURO GATTI MAY BE BEST known for his legendary trilogy with Micky Ward, but before their series played out over three consecutive fights in 2002 and 2003, "Thunder" was already revered as boxing's ultimate warrior because of his involvement in a slew of tremendous action battles.

"I think Arturo was the greatest television fighter ever, the most exciting fighter we've ever seen. I'll go down saying that," said Pat Lynch, Gatti's career-long manager. "He entertained from Day 1 and has given us great moments. Put on any of his fights and it's entertaining."

Fight after fight, the Hall of Fame two-division titleholder delivered action like no other. Four times in the seven years from 1997 through 2003, Gatti (40-9, 31 KOs) participated in The Ring's Fight of the Year.

"People pay to come and see you fight, and a lot of guys don't do what they are supposed to do," Gatti told USA Today in 2002. "But that's who I am. I'm a fighter. I'm a gladiator. I was definitely born for this."

Here's a look at the five best Gatti fights not involving Ward.

WILSON RODRIGUEZ

March 23, 1996 | GATTI KO 6

Madison Square Garden Theater, New York

The fight was dubbed "March Mayhem" and it couldn't have been more appropriate given the utter chaos that would unfold in the ultra-exciting bout that launched the Gatti legend. Making his first junior lightweight title defense and fighting in his first HBO main event, Gatti got a very tough test from Spain's former world title challenger Rodriguez.

By the end of the first round, Gatti's right eye was swollen, and he was in more trouble when he walked into a right-left combination and got dropped to his rear end in the second round.

"That was scary," Lynch said. "It was the first time Arturo was ever dropped. He had bought a BMW before the fight and he said afterward that what went through his mind was, 'My BMW just went out the window and Pat Lynch just had a heart attack.'"

There was already urgency in Gatti's corner after the second round because his eye was virtually closed. It became a major drama following a hellacious third when the ringside doctor examined his badly swollen eye, which the late cutman Joe Souza managed to keep open just enough. The doctor barked at Gatti to cover his left eye and tell him how many fingers he had up or he would stop the fight. Gatti finally obeyed and got it right, but he needed to do something dramatic.

In the fifth, Gatti lost a point for a low blow and then dropped Rodriguez to his knees with a body shot, but found himself in trouble as the round ended. Then, in the sixth and trailing on two scorecards, Gatti slammed a left hook into Rodriguez's chin, flattening him for the 10-count in an awe-inspiring comeback.

"It was a fight for the ages," Lynch said. "And one of the best comebacks ever."

GABRIEL RUELAS

October 4, 1997 | GATTI TKO 5

Caesars Hotel & Casino, Atlantic City

Gatti made the third and final defense of his junior lightweight title in memorable fashion before moving up in weight. How memorable? The rock 'em, sock 'em slugfest with former 130-pound titlist Ruelas was The Ring's 1997 Fight of the Year *and* Knockout of the Year.

There were fireworks from the outset of what was a close fight until the thunderous conclusion. In the fourth round, Gatti, sporting swelling under his left eye, rocked Ruelas with a right hand before being hurt by a left hook and an uppercut. As the round was winding down, Ruelas battered a weary Gatti with around 20 unanswered blows before Gatti finally responded by landing a hard left hook at the bell. They continued to pound away at each other in the fifth round as the swelling under Gatti's eye turned into a cut. As Ruelas continued to stalk, Gatti landed a left hook that flattened Ruelas, who went down flat on his back, slamming his head into the mat. Ruelas beat the count but he was done, and referee Benjy Esteves Jr. waved off a fight that was 38-38 on two scorecards with Gatti up 39-37 on the third.

Gatti, who struggled to make weight, had to drop 11 pounds during fight week following a poor training camp, which then-Main Events matchmaker Carl Moretti, who was close to Gatti, remembers well.

"We were down in camp in West Palm Beach (Florida) and two weeks before the fight, it's a Friday and Arturo doesn't show up in the gym," Moretti recalled. "Then, Sunday night, two female West Palm Beach police women came to the hotel and dropped him off. We thought he had been arrested when they showed up, but they just said, 'We're done with him,' and we knew he didn't do anything but party with them for the weekend. I knew we'd have our hands full with Ruelas. Gatti was having weight problems, and then that situation came up. We couldn't pull out of the fight, so we rolled the dice and hoped he would get through it."

IVAN ROBINSON

August 22, 1998 | ROBINSON SD 10

Boardwalk Hall, Atlantic City

Gatti walked to the ring to the *Rocky* theme song, portending the dramatic, action-packed lightweight slugfest that was The Ring's 1998 Fight and Upset of the Year. Gatti and Robinson were friends, but that didn't stop them from tearing into each other nonstop, with Robinson surviving a near-stoppage loss in the final seconds to pull out a split decision.

It was a firefight from the opening bell and never let up. Gatti's left eye was swollen by Round 3 and nearly closed by the eighth. Gatti scored the only knockdown in the fourth when he landed a right hand high on the head to drop Robinson to all fours. They were both nearly stopped in the unforgettable sixth round and Gatti survived major punishment to stay upright in the ninth round.

But as much drama as there had been, the 10th round was off the charts. Both corners told their man they needed

to win the round, and they let it all hang out. Robinson took control, but then Gatti landed his left hook upstairs to hurt Robinson, who staggered to the ropes and covered up. Gatti went for the knockout, blasting him with abandon for most of the final minute, but Robinson survived.

"It was a very close fight," Lynch said. "He had Ivan out, but the ropes held him up. If there's another minute, maybe 30 seconds, he probably wins the fight."

IVAN ROBINSON 2

December 12, 1998 | ROBINSON UD 10

Taj Mahal, Atlantic City

Four months after their mesmerizing first fight, Gatti and Robinson met in an immediate rematch that was another barnburner, but one the quicker Robinson won more clearly this time. Robinson cut Gatti's left eye in the wild second round and then unloaded numerous unanswered shots to stagger Gatti in the third round. They both landed big shots throughout the back-and-forth fight to produce another exciting slugfest. Robinson landed a right hand in the sixth round that badly hurt Gatti. If Robinson was a bigger puncher, the fight probably would have been over, but Gatti sopped up the punishment and dished out his own, though referee Benjy Esteves Jr. docked him one point for a low blow in the eighth, which was Gatti's best of the fight.

Esteves called timeout for the doctor to check Gatti's cut in the 10th round, when both fighters were visibly spent, but they fought hard until the final bell. Robinson appeared to have won clearly, but had Gatti not had the point deducted, the fight would have been a majority draw.

GIANLUCA BRANCO

January 24, 2004 | GATTI UD 12

Boardwalk Hall, Atlantic City

Gatti fought seven more times following the Ward trilogy, including lopsided knockouts of Leonard Dorin and James Leija in junior welterweight title defenses as well as a stoppage loss to Floyd Mayweather Jr. that cost him the belt. But the most entertaining of Gatti's post-Ward fights was his first assignment, when he met Italy's Branco (32-0-1 at the time) for the vacant WBC 140-pound title Kostya Tszyu had relinquished.

"After the Ward trilogy, Gatti really wanted to fight for a title and we were able to make the fight with Branco," Moretti said. "Me and Pat knew after the Ward fights it would be hard for Gatti to get up for a fight, but we knew he would if he was fighting for a title. Branco didn't back down, but Gatti wasn't going to be denied. Had the hurt hand, the swelling, but that's Gatti. He fought through it and won the title."

Gatti, who was walked to the ring by Ward, claimed a belt in a second division via scores of 116-111, 116-111 and 115-112 while overcoming adversity to do so in a fight that went from a fast-paced boxing match over the first half of the bout to more of a brawl in the second half. After injuring his right hand – for the second fight in a row – with a shot to Branco's hip in the fifth round, Gatti, with his eyes swelling as usual, went to his left and dropped Branco to his backside with a clean hook late in the 10th round.

"I won the bout with my heart and my boxing skills," Gatti said afterward. "Thirty rounds with Micky Ward took a lot out of me, I'm sure, but I came back and won the title." RING

BEYOND THE TRILOGY
MICKY WARD

THE NEW ENGLAND FRINGE CONTENDER WAS ALREADY KNOWN FOR DRAMATIC SLUGFESTS AND AN EXTRAORDINARY TOLERANCE FOR PAIN WHEN HIS THREE-WAR SERIES WITH ARTURO GATTI BEGAN

By Don Stradley

HAD MICKY WARD STAYED put after retreating from the sport in 1991, we'd have little to remember him by. In the early part of his career, he wasn't exactly the Ward we grew to admire for his stand-and-slam style of boxing. In his own words, he'd spent the first part of his career as "a fighter who danced his way to mediocrity before discovering that he could take a punch about as well as anyone out there."

Learning that his jaw was as reliable as a John Deere tractor, Ward transformed into a brawler willing to take punches in order to land his own. And take them he did, far more than was healthy for a human. The accepted gospel was that he wore opponents down with his patented body attack, anchored by a left hook to the lower rib cage that must have felt like a hot spear entering a rival's torso, but as much as his own offense, it was Ward's willingness to absorb punches that melted an opponent's spirit. His three bouts with Arturo Gatti were unforgettable because Ward had finally met an opponent whose gluttony for punishment matched his own.

The difference between Ward and Gatti was in their reactions to pain. Gatti was like watching cut-rate opera – every grimace on his rubbery face seemingly designed to reach the customers in the cheap seats. Ward was deadpan. You never knew when he was hurt, and it wasn't until he was well away from the ring lights that even the slightest trace of agony showed through his sturdy New Englander veneer. Gatti certainly put Ward through miseries the rest of us can never imagine. But Ward had been through hell many times before Gatti started smashing away at him.

Here are five others with whom Micky warred.

LOUIS VEADER

April 13, 1996 | WARD TKO 9
Fleet Center, Boston

Veader sported a nice 31-0 record at the time he fought Ward but was preceded by his reputation as a protected fighter. Veader, many felt, had risen to local fame on a diet of easy opponents. But even though Ward scored a ninth-round TKO and snapped his unbeaten streak, Veader fought well and showed he wasn't just a hype job.

The drama for Ward came in the third round when Veader jabbed him in the solar plexus, causing Ward to come unglued for the next few rounds, unable to breathe. Later, Ward would reveal that he had a minor heart murmur and that Veader's punch had sent his heart into a kind of galloping spasm. Understandably, Ward spent a large part of the fight in a panic, struggling to take in oxygen. Switching from ring savagery to ring savvy, Ward purposely slowed the pace of the contest, which helped him regain his breath. Unfortunately, this also allowed Veader to win rounds. By the eighth, however, Ward felt

Ward battled Shea Neary for eight brutal rounds on a Naseem Hamed undercard in England in 2000.

his body returning to normal. This encouraged him to resume his assault at full speed. He dropped Veader that round and stopped him in the ninth. Veader showed more gameness than anyone had expected, but in the end was no match for the "Pride of Lowell."

This was an important bout for Ward. He was nearly forgotten in the business but proved by beating Veader that he still had something to offer. He wrote in his autobiography, "This, I thought, was what it felt like to be resurrected."

REGGIE GREEN

October 1, 1999 | WARD TKO 10
The Icenter, Salem, New Hampshire

Bloodied and battered and nearly out on his feet in the third round, Ward looked like anything but a winner by the time referee Norm Veilleux raised his hand at 2:40 of Round 10. His vanquished opponent, Reggie Green, remained on his stool, semi-conscious, while his handlers tended to him. As The Boston Globe recounted, the two fighters had beaten each other "half to death, fighting for their pride, their futures, and themselves."

With less than 2,000 customers on hand in a New Hampshire ice rink and an ESPN audience viewing at home, Ward and Green put on a greater battle than had been seen in many Las Vegas bouts that year, including some major pay-per-view events where nationally famous fighters were earning millions of dollars. Green, a slippery boxer-puncher out of Maryland, was ahead on two of the three scorecards, but in the final round began to show the effects of Ward's slashing left hooks to his body. Ward, bleeding from a terrible cut in his mouth and a gash on his cheek, finished the assignment with a wicked volley of blows that sent Green reeling into the ropes. Ward poured on more punches until Veilleux finally stepped in. Ward's performance spurred ESPN analyst Teddy Atlas into one of his vintage raves.

"That truly was fighting," Atlas said. "That was not entertainment. That was not business. That was fighting ... When it came down to what a fighter is about, Micky Ward was it. That is what a fight is, and you don't see it too often no more."

Green had four more bouts and retired in 2001. Though he may not be known for much else in his career, he has an interesting distinction in the memories of Micky Ward. "The worst I've been hurt in a fight," Ward told his biographer Bob Halloran, "was in the third round of the Reggie Green fight." Such an accolade is akin to Evel Knievel recalling the most painful of his many broken bones, and one that Green should wear proudly.

SHEA NEARY

March 11, 2000 | WARD TKO 8
Olympia, London

Ward's eighth-round stoppage of Neary earned him the World Boxing Union's junior welterweight title, and though the belt meant very little in world boxing terms, Ward considered it a worthy bauble. "Some people have told me that I never really won a major title," Ward wrote in his memoir, *A Warrior's Heart*. "Well, in boxing these days, with so many different governing bodies, one title is pretty much as meaningful as another, and if they want to call this one a world championship, I'll take it. Neary was unbeaten when I fought him, and one of the top-ranked fighters in the division. And I beat him. No one can take that away from me."

And no one can take away the fact that this was another of Ward's unforgettable bouts, with each man rocking the other more than once. Ward took a particularly heavy right hand to the jaw that stunned him in the third but continued banging on Neary's head and body. The climax came in the eighth round when Ward landed a left to the stomach followed by an uppercut to the chin that, as the Boston Globe recounted, was "thrown from his bootstraps." Neary was down for the first time in his career, but managed to get up and fight on. Behind on two scorecards in his opponent's hometown, Ward sailed in with more punches until Neary careened backward across the ring and fell again, causing referee Mickey Vann to stop the contest at the 2:55 mark.

The WBU title notwithstanding, the real accomplishment of Ward's win was that the HBO brain trust began thinking his next fight should be against Gatti. That was still a ways off, but the thought was in the air.

Meanwhile, Ward and Neary had given fans something to savor. At times, as they stood forehead-to-forehead trading thunderous uppercuts, it seemed there were two Micky Wards in the ring. Viewers could only tell them apart because Ward was wearing white trunks and shoes.

He was also the one still standing at the end.

ANTONIO DIAZ

August 19, 2000 | DIAZ UD 10

Foxwoods Casino, Mashantucket, Connecticut

Youth was served on this night, when the 24-year-old Diaz fought his way to a 10-round decision over the 34-year-old Ward.

It wasn't an easy win for Diaz. One of the ringside judges had him ahead by only a single point, and Ward dished out plenty of hurt in the late rounds. Later, Ward took the blame for his loss, saying he'd felt a bit off and couldn't get comfortable. It wasn't until the second half of the fight that Ward began scoring with his heaviest punches, but by then it was too late for him to catch up. Still, it was a very rugged contest. Both fighters were cut, and Diaz was penalized for a low blow in the eighth round.

At this point in Ward's career, he'd been stripped of his WBU belt for not fighting Ireland's Eamonn Magee and instead taking on Diaz for a much bigger payday. Ward-Diaz also took place on an HBO show highlighted by the Prince Naseem Hamed-Augie Sanchez fight, which meant Ward was increasing his profile. This fight, though he lost, was the right move for him. He proved that even as the years crept up on him, he was always entertaining and always capable of winning.

In fact, it appeared in the ninth that he was taking charge. He hurt Diaz with a vicious series of punches, bloodied him over the left eye and looked like he was about to pull off another of his miracle finishes.

EMANUEL AUGUSTUS

July 13, 2001 | WARD UD 10

Hampton Beach Casino, Hampton Beach, New Hampshire

The scorecards were deceiving. Ward received a unanimous decision by scores of 98-90, 96-91 and 96-94, which makes it sound like an easy night's work. In actuality, it had been a hellacious fight, one of the greatest ever presented by ESPN Friday Night Fights and The Ring's Fight of the Year for 2001.

Augustus, a quirky journeyman who tended to take fights at a moment's notice, had actually landed more punches during the 10-round contest than Ward – and at a higher percentage rate. It is a testament to the nonstop frenzy of this fight that Augustus, the loser, became nearly Ward's equal in terms of his cultish following.

Ward had actually picked Augustus from a list of possible opponents in order to showcase himself. After his loss to Diaz, Ward needed the kind of all-action bout that Augustus, then known as Emanuel Burton, could help provide. But the eccentric Augustus, a fighter who seemed to train on marijuana and video games, not only gave Ward the sort of fight he'd desired but came close to ruining his plans altogether.

Though Augustus had a reputation for an oddball style that seemed lifted from old Jackie Chan movies, on this night he settled in for a traditional slugfest. He occasionally broke out a bizarre dance step, but he spent most of the fight trading blows with Ward or fighting off the ropes where Ward was trying to pin him. Meanwhile, Ward did what he usually did: He threw punches. According to a statistician who certainly earned his money at this gig, Ward threw a whopping 1,182 of them. Augustus threw nearly as many, making this one of the most fascinating, action-packed fights of not just the year but also the decade. At times, the slightly less than 2,000 customers let out such a deafening roar that ring announcer Mark Beiro held his microphone to the ringside bell so that Ward and Augustus could hear it and realize the round was over. Then there was the crazy heat. "There was no way to see in that building," Ward told ESPN.com in 2010. "It was that hot."

Ward scored a knockdown in the ninth and even smacked Augustus in the head while he was down. Augustus didn't seem to mind. He rose and continued firing, and by the end of this most memorable of nights, the two fighters had combined for approximately 2,100 punches thrown – a bit more than one for every ticketholder.

SLUGFEST

GATTI vs WARD I

THE FIRST FIGHT BETWEEN GATTI AND WARD WAS AN INSTANT CLASSIC ON ITS OWN, BUT IT TOOK A BIT OF CONTROVERSY TO ENSURE THAT THE NEXT CHAPTER OF THEIR CELEBRATED TRILOGY WOULD TAKE PLACE

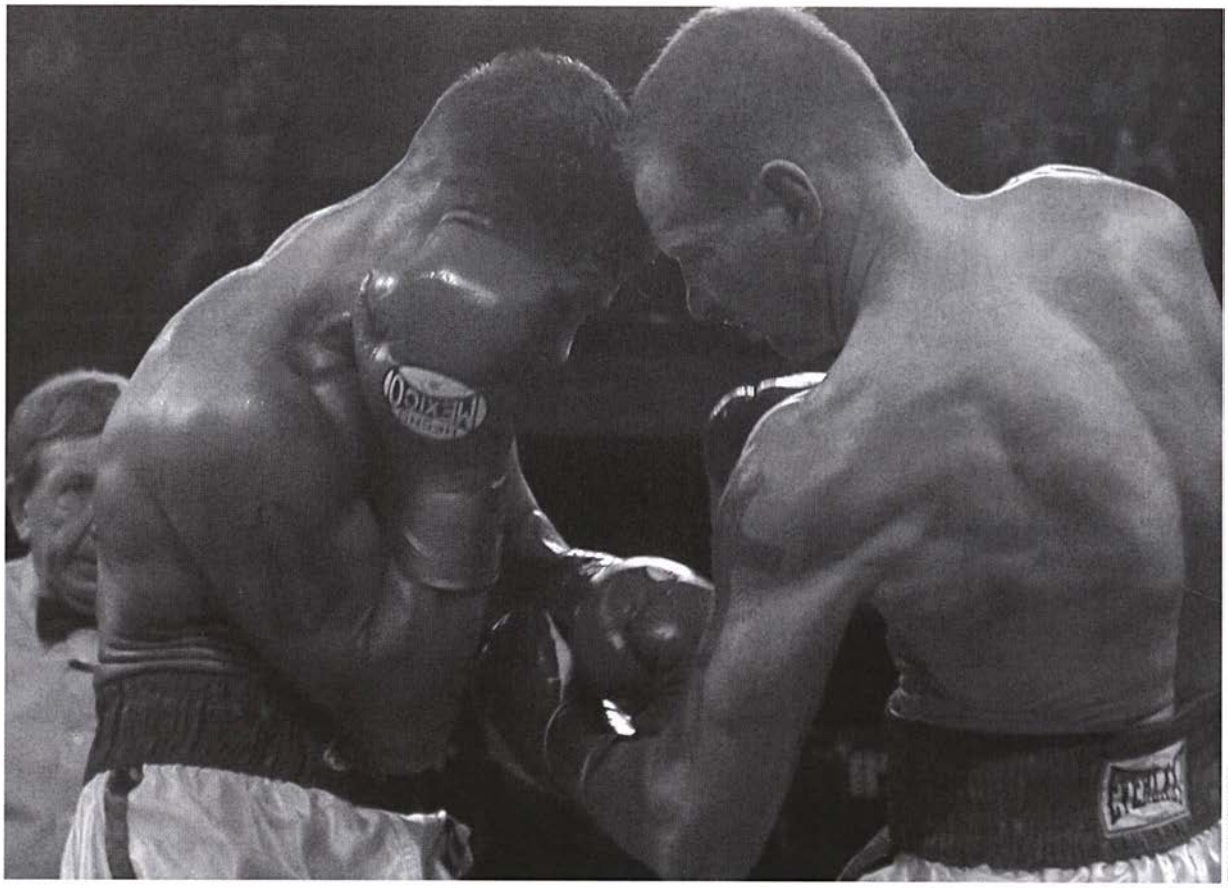
By Bernard Fernandez

There is a commonly accepted notion that "good things always come in threes," and so it also is in boxing. The holiest trinity of the so-called "Rule of Three" is the epic trilogy involving heavyweight legends Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazier, but there are other passion plays in triplicate that also have reserved places in the pantheon of archrivalries that begin with a memorable original fight and extend through two rematches in which the stakes, bragging rights and places in fans' collective memories are incrementally raised. History thus has made room at the head table for such revered three-part series as Bowe-Holyfield, Zale-Graziano, Gans-Nelson, Patterson-Johansson, Duran-De Jesus, Gonzalez-Carbajal and Ross-McLarnin.

But all of the aforementioned trilogies involved bouts in which world championships were on the line on one or more occasions, and most involved outcomes that included at least one knockout. The lack of those distinctions, somewhat curiously, only serves to elevate what took place on three unforgettable nights from May 18, 2002, to June 7, 2003. During that 13-month period, never-say-die junior welterweights Arturo "Thunder" Gatti and "Irish" Micky Ward took turns putting one another through the kind of 10-round torture tests in which mere boxing talent often takes a back seat to such intangibles as heart, will and a dogged refusal to submit to the standard human frailities of pain and fatigue.

Ward, who never did give up his blue-collar day job as a steamroller driver for a Massachusetts road crew, put it best: "I picked a hard fucking way to make a living."

Before Ward and the now-deceased Gatti could march in lockstep to the more cherished annals of their sport, it should be noted that their first fight, widely considered to be the best and most fiercely



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Gatti-Ward I matched veteran sluggers who many boxing pundits thought were on the decline.

contested of their trilogy, might not have happened at all, and once it did, it possibly took the pencil of a single judge at ringside to ensure that Acts 2 and 3 would be tacked onto the riveting opening salvo.

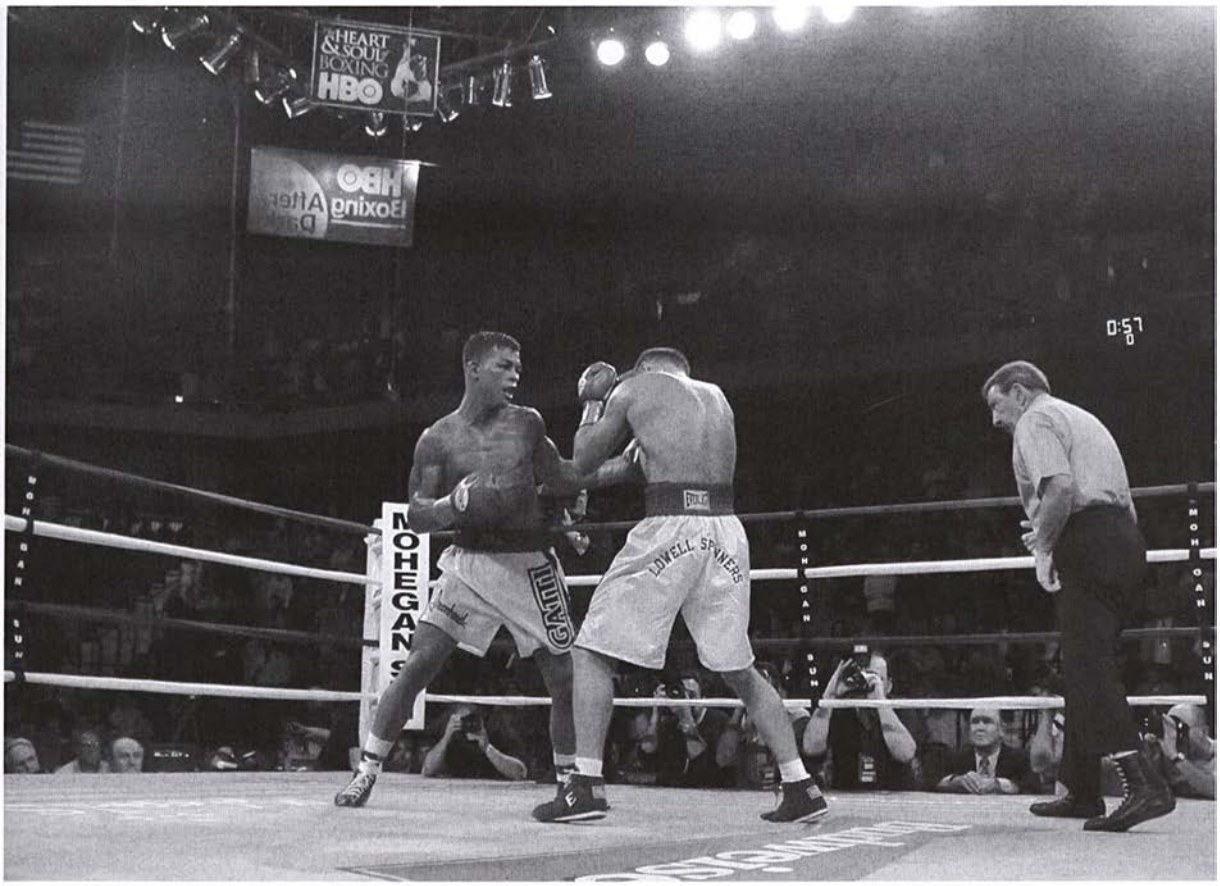
As the beloved action hero of HBO Boxing, the then-30-year-old Gatti was unquestionably the "A" side of that mesmerizing first clash, but hints had begun to drop that his bop-'til-you-drop style had already put him on the downhill slope of a career that eventually would gain him posthumous induction into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 2013. He had been outclassed before being stopped in five rounds by the clearly superior Oscar De La Hoya on March 24, 2001, whereupon Gatti's manager, Pat Lynch, and promotional company, Main Events, decided to make the switch from trainer Hector Rocha to former junior welterweight and welterweight titleholder Buddy McGirt, a slick technician who presumably would smooth some of Gatti's rougher edges and transform him from unrepentant brawler to something more akin to boxer-puncher. In his first fight with McGirt as his chief second, Gatti didn't need to show off too many of his more polished new moves as he stopped Terron Millett in four rounds. But he insisted he would reveal the complete package against Ward, a gritty journeyman whose own ring makeup leaned heavily toward the relentless, down 'n' dirty style the retooled Gatti had vowed to use sparingly at McGirt's behest.

"Ain't gonna be no brawl," Gatti said a few days before he was to meet Ward in the HBO-televised main event at the Mohegan Sun in Uncasville, Connecticut. "I'm going to be moving in and out, and I'm going to beat him up in every round."

Well, there wouldn't have been no brawl at all had an agreement not been reached to pair guaranteed box-office and ratings-grabbing attraction Gatti with Ward, a not-quite-first-tier scrapper with a deserved reputation as a tough customer who backed down from no one. Ward was an always-dangerous body-puncher whose most effective weapons were wicked hooks delivered from both the orthodox and southpaw stances.

"Arturo was a superstar," says Lou DiBella, a former senior vice president of HBO Sports who was involved in staging some of Gatti's more thrill-packed appearances on the premium cable giant before leaving to form his own promotional company and affiliating with Ward. "Not everyone wanted to admit he was a superstar, because he wasn't a pound-for-pound guy, but he was like a Rocky Graziano for that period of time, and he put asses in seats.

"Micky was not a fight that Arturo's people wanted, because they didn't think there was enough gain for their guy to sustain the kind of pain Micky was apt to bring. They



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saw it as a high risk, low reward kind of fight. Maybe they didn't anticipate that hardcore boxing fans got it, that they understood that Ward-Gatti was sure to be a cult matchup."

For his part, Lynch disputes the suggestion that Team Gatti was hesitant to mix it up with Ward, who might have been described at that point as Gatti Lite, a somewhat lesser version of the human highlight reel that the Italian-born, Montreal-raised, Jersey City-based fighter had been in establishing his reputation, win or lose, in instant-classic wars against Wilson Rodriguez, Angel Manfredy, Gabriel Ruelas and Ivan Robinson.

"When Ward got pitched to us, we discussed it," Lynch says now. "We were comfortable with him as an opponent for Arturo. There was no fear factor on our part. Now, after what happened in that fight, we probably should have known there was something to fear. But going in, we were fine."

The Gatti side also must have been amenable to site selection in consenting that the event be staged at the Mohegan Sun instead of Atlantic City, where Gatti was the franchise. The New England venue ostensibly made Ward, a sizable underdog, the rooting choice for the sellout crowd of 6,254, although there were enough Gatti supporters there to split support almost down the middle.

The evolving Gatti that McGirt had envisioned was on display in the first two rounds, which he won handily, but the battle was inevitably joined toward the end of Round 3 as Ward, who from the first minute of the first round had to contend with a nasty cut above his right eye, hurt Gatti with some of his signature shots downstairs. "So much for the boxing," color commentator Emanuel Steward, who no doubt had a suspicion of how the rest of the fight would go, informed HBO viewers.

Despite the spacious 22-foot ring, much of what happened from that point could have been contested in a phone booth as Ward continued to apply constant pressure, obliging Gatti to engage him at close quarters. There was back-and-forth trading, to be sure, but also the kind of abrupt momentum swings that suggested that one determined man or the other was poised to seize absolute control. In each such instance, however, the pendulum soon swung the other way.

If there were turning points on which the outcome – a majority decision for Ward that conceivably could have gone to Gatti – likely hinged, they occurred in the fourth and ninth rounds, with the frenetic, time-capsule pace of Round 9 moving Steward to exclaim "You dream of fights like this!" and blow-by-blow announcer Jim Lampley, noting that Gatti appeared to be completely spent, to urge referee Frank Cappuccino to "Stop it, Frank! You can stop it at any time! Arturo Gatti's out on his feet! But Frank Cappuccino's going to let them keep going!"

Cappuccino also prominently figured in Round 4. Having warned Gatti for a flagrant (but likely unintentional) low blow in the

Ward struck with his trademark left to the body in Round 9. Fans are still awed that Gatti got up.

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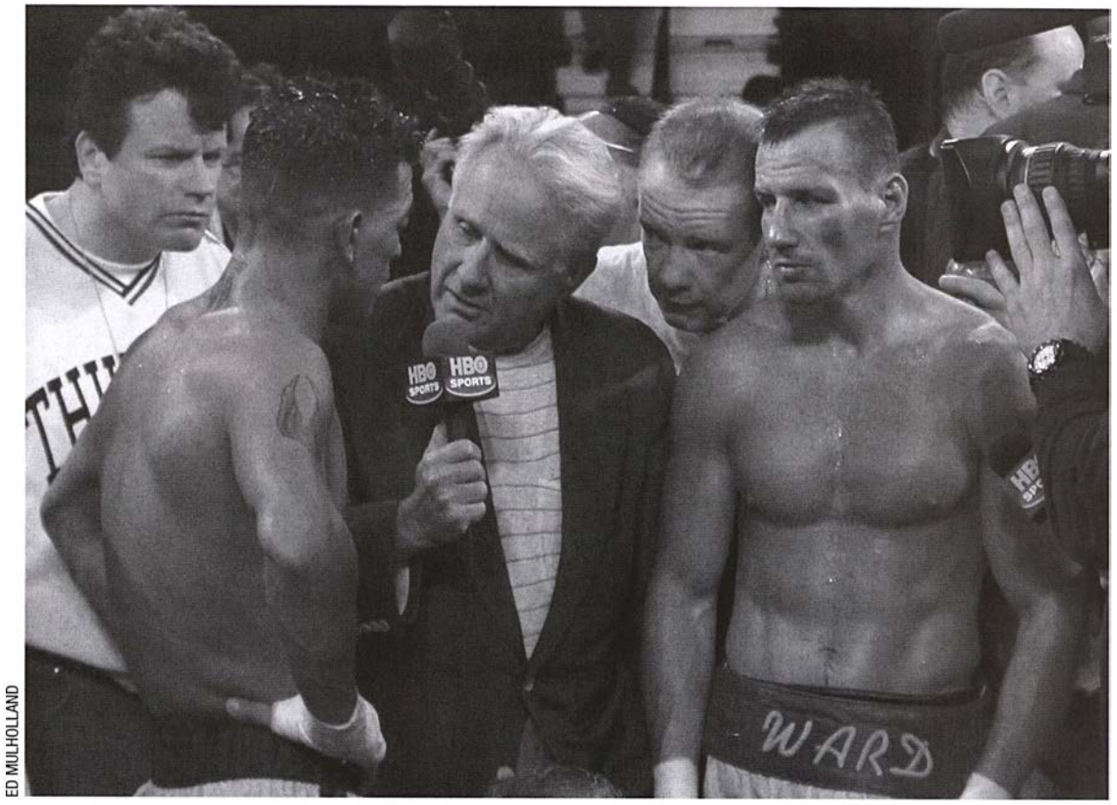

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What could've been a draw or a ninth-round TKO spawned a great trilogy and a powerful friendship.

second round, he jumped in and deducted a penalty point from Gatti in the fourth after he floored Ward with a ripping shot that was clearly below the belt. That subtraction proved significant, but no more so than the scorecard submitted by Massachusetts-based judge Richard Flaherty, who gave the ninth round to Ward by an excessively wide 10-7 margin while cohorts Frank Lombardi and Steve Weisfeld each saw it as a more traditional 10-8, given the knockdown. When all the numbers were tallied, Lombardi had the fight a standoff at 94-94 while Flaherty and Weisfeld favored Ward by 94-93 and 95-93, respectively, meaning that the close nod for "Irish" Micky would have been changed to a majority draw had Flaherty also scored Round 9 at 10-8.

"No way that should have been a 10-7 round," complained then-Main Events president Gary Shaw. "That's a hometown thing."

Gatti recuperated during the one-minute interval enough to win the 10th round on all three judges' cards, but McGirt admits he considered stopping the fight late in the ninth as his guy appeared to be in desperate straits. McGirt even had a towel in his hand, prepared to toss it into the ring as a sign of surrender. But something, perhaps Gatti's reputation for storming back from the brink, kept him from making that throw.

"Arturo was hurt; I won't lie," McGirt concedes. "He was crying in the corner. There were tears literally rolling down his face. I've never seen that in my life. But he told me, 'I'm all right, coach,' and I believed him because, well, he was Arturo Gatti."

Ward's corner mistakenly misinterpreted McGirt's body language and the gripped towel late in Round 9 as a signal the fight was over, moving Ward to prematurely celebrate. It was up to Cappuccino to emphatically tell him, "Whoa! Whoa! The fight ain't over! Last round! Go back to the corner – all the way back!"

Ward came away with the biggest victory of his career anyway, but the timekeeper allowed maybe a half-minute to come off the round clock as Cappuccino excitedly issued Ward those instructions, lost seconds that might have been crucial to Gatti's chances of registering the knockdown he would have needed to reclaim the upper hand on the scorecards. It is a question that wasn't answered then and never will be.

But a reflective Lynch now says that, as things turned out, it was providential that Flaherty scored the ninth round as he did, because if he hadn't, there might not have been Gatti-Ward II and III.

"If it wasn't for that, I never would have agreed to a second fight with Micky," Lynch says. "And without a second fight, there would not have been a third. Back in the dressing room after the first fight, Arturo told me, 'Do you remember me telling you that the toughest fight of my life will be when I fight someone just like me? Well, tonight I fought somebody just like me.'" RING

THE REMATCH

GATTI vs WARD II

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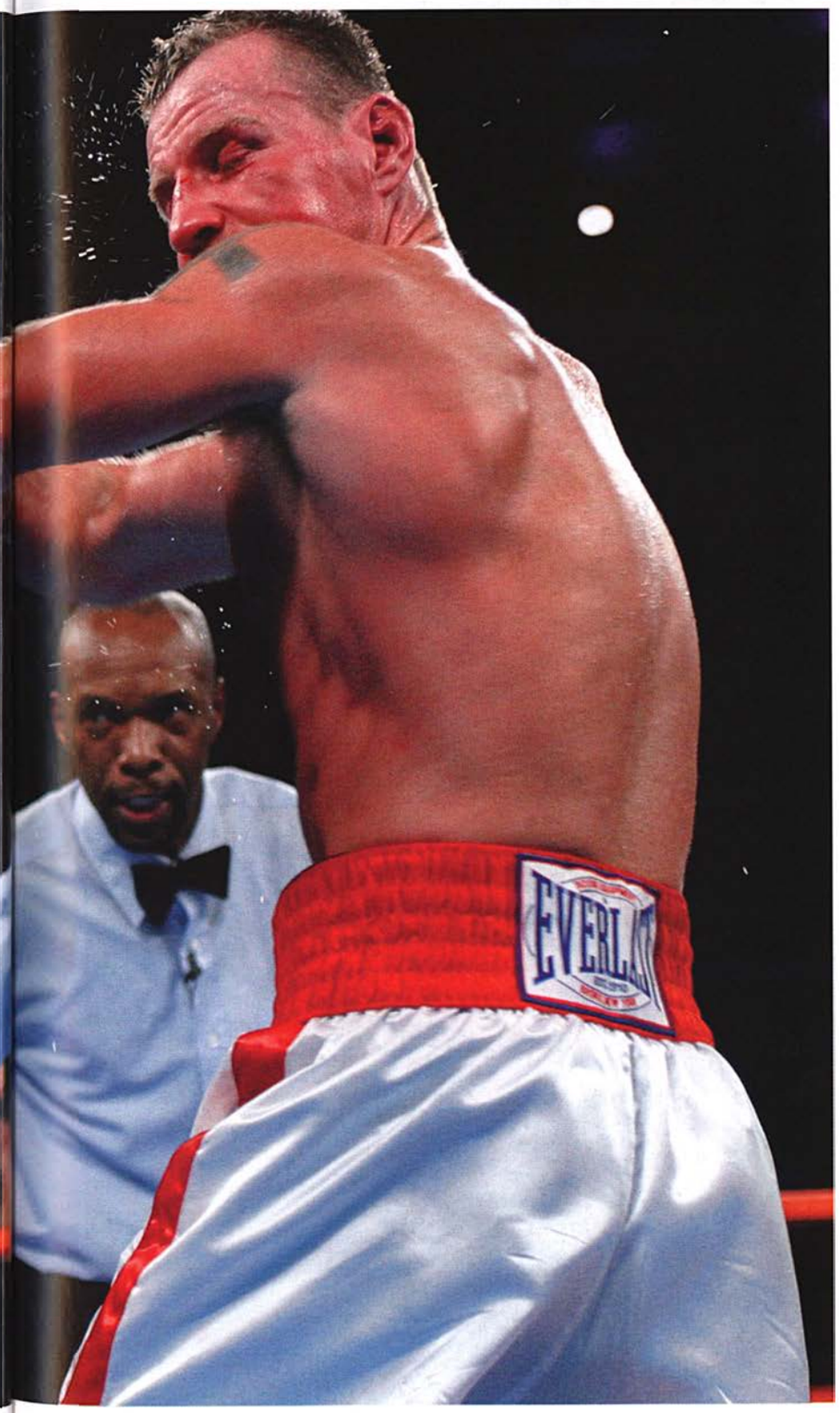

GATTI'S TRADEMARK SAVAGERY WAS REPLACED WITH DISCIPLINED BOXING DURING A MUST-WIN SECOND GO-AROUND WITH WARD, WHO DISPLAYED HIS USUAL VALOR

By Eric Raskin

THE SECOND BOUT between Arturo Gatti and Micky Ward was the worst fight of their trilogy.

It was the least competitive, the least action-packed, the least rewatchable. There was an obscenely high bar, of course, since their other two battles were both recognized as The Ring's Fight of the Year. By the standards of any *normal* boxing match, Gatti-Ward II was one hell of an entertaining 30 minutes of blunt-force warfare. Still, most of the iconic boxing rivalries have that one bout that isn't quite as spectacular as the others – Ali-Frazier II, Pacquiao-Marquez III, Barrera-Morales II, Zale-Graziano III – and in the Gatti-Ward saga, that is clearly the second fight.

Gatti was confident going into the much-anticipated rematch, as was Ward, who received a career-high payday and earned every penny.

If we're ranking the fights by what they revealed about the competitors, however, Gatti-Ward II was arguably the most revealing fight of their trilogy. It displayed Gatti at his most skillful and revealed what he was capable of on those rare occasions when his dial pointed toward discipline over destruction and he diligently stuck to a game plan. And it displayed Ward at his most unflinchingly brave – if largely to his own detriment – and revealed, perhaps more than any other fight in a career loaded with hard-headed examples, just how impossible it was to make this man give up.

"The second fight was Arturo's night. But Micky showed balls and courage and heart and will and pride – everything," reflected Ward's then-adviser, HBO executive-turned-promoter Lou DiBella. "Micky had an abundance of … being a man. I don't know how else to express it. Micky had something that made him different. He had this warrior spirit: *I love this, and this is what I know, and I'm going to give you the last ounce of blood and guts and heart that I have.* That's what that second fight was for Micky. Arturo, it was one of his best

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boxing performances, and a really well-fought fight, and an earned win. But Micky, it was almost an ungodly display of all that other stuff."

It's easy to forget now because Gatti fought on for another five years, won another major title, challenged the pound-for-pound best boxer in the world and headlined eight more sellout or near-sellout HBO cards at Boardwalk Hall, but his career at the top level would have been over if he'd lost this rematch against Ward. Counting the majority decision defeat against Ward six months earlier, Gatti was just 5-5 in his previous 10 bouts. Two straight losses to a guy with double-digit defeats himself – especially if the second one was to prove anywhere near as physically punishing as the first – and that's it, you're done.

For the rematch, 11 years and 40 fights into his pro career, everything was on the line for Gatti. And he trained accordingly.

"He was so prepared, physically and mentally," recalled Gatti's trainer, Buddy McGirt. "He knew he needed his legs. His legs really weren't where he wanted them to be for the first fight. He boxed well for seven rounds, but after that, he had to sit in the trenches. But for the rematch, him and Teddy Cruz, his conditioning guy, they worked more on his legs than anything. Because Arturo knew: It was either shit or get off the pot. To keep having big fights, he had to win this fight."

Gatti was 30 and, theoretically, had a future in front of him. Ward was 37. He was a fight or two from the finish line and he knew it, and just by securing his first million-dollar purse in this rematch, he'd already won. He and Gatti made a combined $2.7 million for this bout – a 150 percent increase over the first fight – and it was worth every penny for HBO, the promoters and Boardwalk Hall, which tallied a $1.6 million gate for the sold-out rematch, making it the largest-grossing non-heavyweight fight in Atlantic City history.

When the opening bell rang, HBO's Larry Merchant asked two questions that would prove prophetic in terms of the narrative of the 10 rounds ahead: "Can Micky Ward make Arturo Gatti fight him again? Is it in Gatti's DNA to do anything else?"

Gatti winked at McGirt as the fight was about to begin and told him, "Coach, we got this." And he came right out jabbing, moving, landing laser counter right hands over the top, and keeping Ward – and his own instincts to brawl – at bay. In the opening round, Ward threw 39 total punches. Gatti threw 43 *jabs*.

When he came back to the corner, McGirt insisted he "stay low," their

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simple plan to prevent Irish Micky from landing his debilitating left to the body. Ward snuck a couple of them in there in the second round, but Gatti kept boxing and landed more than his share of body punches as well.

"Arturo was just on point with everything that night," McGirt reflected. "He was in such a zone. And we knew from the first fight that Micky's jab, it was mostly a decoy to set you up for that hook to the body. So I told Arturo, just time the jab and come over the top to make him hesitate on throwing it. That way he can't get the distance he needs to get to that body shot."

Gatti's right hand over the top did much more than just dissuade Ward when it crashed home 43 seconds into the third round. It busted his eardrum. And it simultaneously created explosive drama and sucked most of the competitiveness out of the contest. That fight-altering moment came when Ward lunged forward out of a break and Gatti's right cross connected with his left ear. Ward tumbled face-first into the corner post as if he'd just polished off a case of Guinness, and after beating referee Earl Morton's count, he bounced up and down (and a little bit sideways) repeatedly, desperately trying to locate his legs. Gatti pounced. An uncoordinated Ward extended his arms, trying to block shots as he swayed along the ropes. Punches rained down and made the aging warrior dip and swoon. Ward banged his own body as if to say "bring it," so Gatti brought it, with a right hand that nearly floored Micky again. But because he's Micky Ward, he stayed up. And because he's Micky Ward, he landed a left to the liver that hurt Gatti and provoked a wild exchange in the waning moments of the round that left the crowd delirious, screaming like they'd just watched "Round 9" redux.

"By no rights after he busted his eardrum should Micky have been able to make that a fight," DiBella asserted. "His equilibrium was gone. I was worried. But Micky was still dangerous. Nothing with Micky surprised me – the same way that nothing with Arturo surprised me. I mean, these guys were a different ilk. They were a different breed. As bad as one or the other was hurt in one of those three fights, there wasn't a moment in any of those fights that in the back of my head I wasn't worried about *both* of them. And that includes in the second fight when Ward was messed up, because even then, I knew he could hurt Arturo.

"Those guys, it was mirror images of the same once-in-a-generation set of balls."

For the remainder of the fight, Ward tried, against all logic and all self-preservational common sense, to make a fight of it, while Gatti battled with himself and tried not to fall off the boxing wagon. Ward had moments and might have won the fourth round, but the faster, craftier Gatti for the most part kept widening his lead, even showboating with an Ali shuffle of sorts in the sixth. His

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Gatti and young members of his team were pleased with his skillful performance in the Ward rematch.

defense was decidedly un-Gatti-like at times, such as in Round 7, when CompuBox credited Ward with just five power shots landed of 34 thrown. And while Micky couldn't hit Arturo, Arturo couldn't miss Micky. He went 21 for 38 on power punches in that same round. "It's one thing to have a plan," Merchant said in the seventh. "It's another to execute it as well as he is doing here."

After every round, McGirt implored Gatti to keep walking that line – and not to go nuts trying for the knockout.

"After Micky got up in the third round, I knew he wasn't knocking him out," McGirt recalled. "Arturo knew boxing was working and he knew he could box for 10 rounds. In the fights I trained him, this was the best he ever boxed. And I think that it was always in him. He just never used it because he was caught up in that crowd-pleasing style. Everybody loved it, it was putting money in his pocket, and he enjoyed the hype behind it, it kept his adrenaline going. But he had the ability. I think it was always in him. I just had to remind him."

In the final three rounds, Ward tried to play the role of the devil on Gatti's other shoulder. He wouldn't stop coming. As Gatti was almost skipping around the ring in the ninth and then eluding punches with his hands at his sides, Ward kept firing. Arguably, he was starting to win rounds. But he couldn't convince Gatti to be Gatti – at least not until the back half of the final round. Finally, "Thunder" gave in to the roar of the Jersey Shore crowd and fired flat-footed combinations. A spectacular final minute of the fight was highlighted by exhausted two-way caveman slugging.

But Gatti had used his brain and his legs enough – with a little help from that right hand to the ear – to render any semblance of a late Ward rally immaterial. Gatti won by scores of 98-91, 98-91 and 98-90. Those numbers told the story of how he'd boxed – how he *could* box, on the right night, against the right opponent, with the right motivation.

Those numbers didn't tell the full story of Ward's suffering. He'd been brave to a fault, and he couldn't shake off the damage. In order to secure a third fight with Gatti and an even bigger payday, "He hid from everybody how fucked up he was," DiBella said. "He bluffed the doctors, and he lied to the rest of us.

"He never really fully recovered from the second fight. And the word 'toughness,' I think it understates the point a little bit. Micky wasn't just a tough guy. It was something beyond toughness. Micky was a survivor."

Win or lose, that was always true. Ward's survival instincts were on naked display in that second fight with Gatti. And they were outshone only by Gatti's ability to ignore his every base instinct in a fight he needed to win. RING

UNBREAKER

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GATTI vs WARD III

THE FINAL CHAPTER OF THE GATTI-WARD TRILOGY WAS THE MOST PUNISHING FOR THE FIGHTERS, BUT THEIR COMPETITIVE SPIRIT FORGED AN UNBREAKABLE BOND

By Ron Borges

By the time Micky Ward and Arturo Gatti faced each other for the third and final time in 13 months, each knew what was coming. In a word, hellfire.

The two of them had twice done terrible things to each other inside a boxing ring, things not even time could fully repair. Often hatred becomes the byproduct of such a fiercely physical rivalry, but in this case their concussive confrontations created something quite different. They created the kind of love only two warriors who have fought each other bravely on harsh battlefields can quite fathom.

By June 7, 2003, the things they'd shared had made them brothers forged in a cauldron of legalized assault. They had become blood brothers. What would happen between them on this final night would only solidify their plasmatic bond.

"I used to wonder what would happen if I fought my twin. Now I know," Gatti once said of Ward. "I never thought I'd ever fight a guy who was just like me. Facing him was like fighting myself. Micky was me and I was Micky. Two guys who wanted to win. Whatever the price."

Ward was ready to retire before his third bout with Gatti, but he still emptied what was left in his tank.

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By their final meeting, Ward was nearly 38 and ready to retire, a decision he'd reached months before the acrimonious financial negotiations between the two sides were settled. A scrappy club fighter for most of his career, Ward would make nearly $3 million in his final three fights courtesy of what he and Gatti were willing to do to each other. The two of them earned every penny. Some people sing for their supper. These two bled for it.

Many wondered before this final fight if it could live up to its predecessors, two bloody affairs they had split with Ward winning the first and Gatti the second. Each had been knocked down. Each had gotten up. The latter was more important than the former, for it was the essence of each man, as the rubber match would once again prove.

Still, some wondered if the retiring Ward would be willing to go through

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As he had in the first two bouts, Gatti won the early rounds with superior hand speed.

the pain he knew was coming a third time to try and win what would be his last dance with Gatti or anyone else other than his wife.

"I know I gave my all in this place to prepare for what's coming," Ward said only days before the third fight while sitting in the gym where he'd trained himself so many times before. "This is my last fight, but that hasn't changed nothing. I still have the will to want to win.

"I know some people think when you say it's your last fight that you're just going to go there for the payday. If they say that, they don't know me. I know it's time to stop, but until Sunday morning I'm a fighter.

"I know what this fight is. I can't take the heart out of that guy and he can't take the heart out of me. I can't take the heart out of him, but I can beat him. We both know what's coming."

Rare is the rematch that equals what came before it. By a third time, each fighter knows so much about the other it becomes nearly impossible to duplicate. In this case, the trilogy began with a bout that became the 2002 Ring Magazine Fight of the Year. It ended on June 7, 2003, with what became Ring's 2003 Fight of the Year, a classic battle of skill and will with the latter far more essential than the former.

Gatti, as he had in their second fight, used superior speed and movement to create a winning margin between him and Ward, but it was a margin painfully gained.

As he did in their first two bouts, Ward continued to test Gatti's body and chin, raking the latter with right hooks as harsh as the storm waves that sometimes pound the Boardwalk outside the Atlantic City Convention Hall where they battled. A short right hand and a left behind it to the top of the head dropped Gatti with seconds left in the sixth round, and when he arose he seemed in big trouble. That, as Ward well understood, was when Gatti was at his most dangerous.

Gatti fired back the next round when Ward tried to finish him, hurting Ward with a string of combinations that had the crowd of 12,643 on its feet. It was the position fans most often found themselves when these two squared off.

By the end of Round 7, it seemed Ward was fading despite the fact that Gatti had become a one-armed fighter after breaking his right hand on Ward's hip in the fourth round, but the pendulum of shared violence always swung back and forth between them. It would again in their final round together.

The two not only touched gloves before Round 10 began but reached out and hugged each other as Ward lightly kissed Gatti on the cheek. Then he stepped back and punched him in the face. It was not a love tap.

They tore at each other for three final minutes, refusing to concede anything. Attacking wildly, Ward reminded anyone watching what the will to win was, landing a right hook followed by a left and right hand that forced Gatti to squat down on the second rope to avoid falling. It could have been ruled a technical knockdown, but Gatti sprung up in an instant and referee Earl Morton missed it.

Quickly Gatti fired back, blood billowing from his mouth and exhaustion evident on both fighters' faces until, mercifully, the final bell tolled. One could barely hear it through the din as they draped their arms over each other's shoulders and embraced for nearly a minute.

Ward was bleeding from his nose and above his left eye. He had a huge

AL BELLO

It was never easy versus Ward. Gatti takes a deep breath after being dropped in Round 6.

red lump in the center of his forehead and one cheek looked like someone had worked it over with a carpenter's plane.

Gatti's mouth was filled with blood, his lips were swollen, his face had begun to become disfigured, his left eye was cut and his right hand was broken. He had outboxed Ward on his way to a 10-round decision. But he'd paid a higher price this time even though he'd landed a shot in the third round that so wobbled the interior of Ward's eye that he saw double the rest of the fight and hadn't fully regained normal vision even years later.

"Oh, that Micky Ward," Gatti said. "What heart he's got. Anybody else would have quit. Him? Every time I hurt him, he hit me harder. I got great respect for him, but I'm glad I won't see him anymore."

When asked about the outcome, Ward conceded, "He did enough. I got no problem with it. I did all I could. It's about mutual respect … not about who's tougher. We're both tough guys. That's what kids in the world should have is respect for each other."

Barely an hour later, their toughness would again be on display in a lonelier place with only a small audience left to appreciate it. Lying side-by-side on gurneys in the Atlantic City Medical Center's emergency room, a thin cloth curtain separating them, the only sound the fighters heard was the constant beep of heart monitors hooked to their chests. Occasionally one or the other spoke, but not often. Finally Gatti said to his fiancée, Vivian, through badly swollen lips, "I wish I was better at golf."

Then he laughed.

She replied, "I do, too."

She wasn't laughing.

A foot away lay Ward, whose then-fiancée and future wife, Charlene, sat at the foot of his bed in a stiff-backed metal chair. His face looked better than Gatti's, which is to say it didn't look good at all. Ward had stitches above his left eye, but a trickle of blood had run down the side of his face. No one took the time to wipe it away. Why bother now?

Gatti's face was badly bruised and swollen, disfigured in a way that would have shocked Ward's 14-year-old daughter. Earlier in the week,

AL BELLO

The third bout took a terrible physical toll on both fighters. Ward never fought again.

she'd been asked by a New York Times reporter what she thought of the man who had given her father so much trouble. She said, "I think he's cute." Not after her father finished with him.

Beaten up but never beaten down, Ward and Gatti joked occasionally but mostly shared suffering in silence until Ward was wheeled away to have a CAT scan because he'd been complaining of double vision and a headache, the result of a Gatti temple shot in the third round. When he returned, he told Gatti, "They didn't find nothing in there. Why would they?"

They laughed again. The women at their bedsides did not. Some things are only funny to warriors.

Soon a siren screamed and a guy came into the hospital with a gunshot wound. A fight broke out in the waiting room between the family of the shooter and his victim. A half-dozen cop cars rolled up to quell things. They could have used them at Boardwalk Hall an hour or two earlier, but they weren't called because the assault going on there was not only legal, it was taxable.

Around 2 a.m., doctors provided Ward with a final, pyrrhic victory over Gatti. While the former junior lightweight titleholder's body lay encased in covers up to his chin to try and raise his body temperature enough to put a cast on his broken hand, Ward was being allowed to leave with a warning that the swelling would take a few days to recede, the cuts a few weeks to heal and, oh yeah, his urine would be red for a while from internal bleeding as a result of the ferocity of the body shots he'd endured.

As he prepared to go, Ward walked to Gatti's bedside and they embraced. "Take care of yourself," Ward said. Another siren screamed and Gatti replied, "You be careful out there."

Be careful? What could be out there more threatening to Ward than 30 rounds in the presence of Gatti?

Then Ward turned to Gatti and said, "I love you."

"I love you, too," Gatti said back. "I'll see you soon … but not too soon."

Around an hour later, Gatti was finally released as well. He left wearing a blue sweatsuit, sandals and a sling. He'd been given the same warnings, including the one about the ravages of internal bleeding. He was 31 that night, and he would remain fast friends with Ward the rest of his life, playing golf in Florida, drinking a few beers and enjoying the company of the only other person who could understand why they fought the way they did.

Gatti would ask Ward to train him for what became his last fight three years later, a terribly one-sided loss to Alfonso Gomez. Ward agreed and later said he never saw coming what happened that night. Perhaps because love is blind.

Two years later, Gatti was dead at 37, the victim of either suicide or murder. On Gatti's final day above ground, one of the people by his side was his blood brother. Before they lowered the casket, Micky Ward gave it one last left hook.

What other way could there be for him to tell his old friend goodbye?

THREE BY THE NUMBERS

THE GATTI-WARD TRILOGY WAS LARGELY DEFINED BY HUMAN INTANGIBLES, BUT IT WAS ROOTED IN SOME EPIC STATISTICS

By Lee Groves

ED MULHOLLAND

CompuBox stats support the Gatti-Ward trilogy's status as an all-time great three-bout series.

When it became known that Arturo Gatti and Micky Ward were scheduled to clash on May 18, 2002, at the Mohegan Sun in Uncasville, Connecticut, boxing fans foresaw an instant classic. And why not? Gatti, the onetime IBF junior lightweight titlist, was boxing's undisputed drama king, thanks to victorious wars with Wilson Rodriguez and Gabriel Ruelas and pulsating defeats against Angel Manfredy and Ivan Robinson (twice), while Ward was a fellow action hero who'd lost to Harold Brazier, Charles Murray, Vince Phillips, Zab Judah and Jesse James Leija but bested Shea Neary, Emanuel Augustus, Alfonso Sanchez and Louis Veader (twice). They were thought to be near the same place in their careers – the 30-year-old Gatti and the 36-year-old Ward probably had seen their best days. But while many expected their clash to produce fireworks, no one could have guessed that the second half of their fire-in-the-skies first fight would spawn one of history's most celebrated trilogies.

Gatti-Ward proudly stands shoulder-to-shoulder with Ali-Frazier, Zale-Graziano, Barrera-Morales, Bowe-Holyfield and Patterson-Johansson as one of the best three-fight series ever waged. It is worthy to note that, unlike the fights mentioned in the last sentence, Gatti-Ward is the only pairing in which no world titles were at stake, a fact that only adds to its old-school purity.

The aftereffects of their savage encounters lifted both men's profiles in ways far beyond the ring. Ward

GATTI vs. WARD I

Total Punches Landed / Thrown

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
GATTI	31/70	26/66	39/92	22/70	54/96	32/76	28/69	25/66	42/75	51/99
	44.3%	39.4%	42.4%	31.4%	56.3%	42.1%	40.6%	37.9%	56%	51.5%
WARD	6/23	12/34	24/60	19/44	44/83	18/60	16/34	42/71	68/93	19/48
	26.1%	35.3%	40%	43.2%	53%	30%	47.1%	59.2%	73.1%	39.6%

Jab Landed / Thrown

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
GATTI	2/23	7/34	9/35	3/37	5/22	14/38	6/31	6/30	0/14	2/20
	8.7%	20.6%	25.7%	8.1%	22.7%	36.8%	19.4%	20%	0%	10%
WARD	1/7	5/16	1/9	3/13	5/9	5/29	6/15	5/14	8/11	4/15
	14.3%	31.3%	11.1%	23.1%	55.6%	17.2%	40%	35.7%	72.7%	26.7%

Power Punches Landed / Thrown

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
GATTI	29/47	19/32	30/57	19/33	49/74	18/38	22/38	19/36	42/61	49/79
	61.7%	59.4%	52.6%	57.6%	66.2%	47.4%	57.9%	52.8%	68.9%	62%
WARD	5/16	7/18	23/51	16/31	39/74	13/31	10/19	37/57	60/82	15/33
	31.3%	38.9%	45.1%	51.6%	52.7%	41.9%	52.6%	64.9%	73.2%	45.5%

Final Punch Stat Report

	Total Punches	Total Jabs	Power Punches
GATTI	350/779	54/284	296/495
	44.9%	19%	59.8%
WARD	268/550	43/138	225/412
	48.7%	31.2%	54.6%

joined Gatti as a beloved blood-and-guts warrior of the highest order, and he gained enough mainstream name recognition that a movie based on his life story was made. As for Gatti, the Ward fights enhanced his career enough to earn first-ballot Hall of Fame status in 2013, four years after his death and six years after his final ring battle.

For all the accolades their fights received – their first and third meetings were deemed The Ring's Fight of the Year in 2002 and 2003 – the most remarkable result was a friendship so strong that Ward served as trainer for "Thunder's" final bout with Alfonso Gomez.

One aspect of the Gatti-Ward series that further illustrates the degree of their ferocity is the statistics compiled by CompuBox, which was at ringside for all three fights.

The initial battle produced numbers that pushed the limits of human endurance, especially from the middle rounds onward. The first two rounds, however, belonged to Gatti, whose original fight plan was to use his legs and box from long range. He was following a blueprint created by chief second James "Buddy" McGirt, who guided Gatti to an eye-opening fourth-round TKO over Terron Millett in the first fight of their partnership nearly four months earlier, and Gatti hoped that game plan would produce similar success against Ward.

In the opening six minutes, Gatti averaged 29 jabs per round and built a 57-18 bulge in total connects, landing 42 percent of his total punches to Ward's 32 percent. But starting in Round 3, Ward began cutting the distance and started to impose a trench war: Of 63 combined connects, 53 were power shots, with Gatti garnering 30 to Ward's 23.

Ward's mathematical gap narrowed further in Round 4 when a Gatti low blow prompted referee Frank Cappuccino to deduct a point. In Round 5, the war was truly on as Gatti went 54 of 96 overall (56 percent) and Ward 44 of 83 (53 percent). Of their 98 combined connects, 88 were power punches.

Gatti successfully reimposed his mobility and hand speed in the seventh by throwing 31 jabs, which allowed him to outland Ward 28-16 overall and out-throw him 69-34. But Ward continued to plug away, and in Round 8 he turned the fight by brawling his way to a 37-19 lead in total connects while landing a stratospheric 65 percent to Gatti's 53 percent in power punches.

The ninth round, however, lifted this fight from excellent to legendary. In a three-minute span Emanuel Steward declared "the round of the

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GATTI vs. WARD II

Total Punches Landed / Thrown

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
WARD	13/39	19/53	18/50	22/55	21/77	12/62	14/64	16/59	24/79	21/88
	33.3%	35.8%	36%	40%	27.3%	19.4%	21.9%	27.1%	30.4%	23.9%
GATTI	26/79	31/75	33/90	26/85	30/84	27/75	26/79	23/76	20/74	34/75
	32.9%	41.3%	36.7%	30.6%	35.7%	36%	32.9%	30.3%	27%	45.3%

Jab Landed / Thrown

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
WARD	5/23	4/17	1/13	2/8	9/36	5/25	9/30	8/27	3/18	0/12
	21.7%	23.5%	7.7%	25%	25%	20%	30%	29.6%	16.7%	0%
GATTI	9/43	12/40	5/24	6/47	10/43	8/40	5/41	8/43	3/28	5/13
	20.9%	30%	20.8%	12.8%	23.3%	20%	12.2%	18.6%	10.7%	38.5%

Power Punches Landed / Thrown

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
WARD	8/16	15/36	17/37	20/47	12/41	7/37	5/34	8/32	21/61	21/76
	50%	41.7%	45.9%	42.6%	29.3%	18.9%	14.7%	25%	34.4%	27.6%
GATTI	17/36	19/35	28/66	20/38	20/41	19/35	21/38	15/33	17/46	29/62
	47.2%	54.3%	42.4%	52.6%	48.8%	54.3%	55.3%	45.5%	37%	46.8%

Final Punch Stat Report

	Total Punches	Total Jabs	Power Punches
WARD	180/626	46/209	134/417
	28.8%	22%	32.1%
GATTI	276/792	71/362	205/430
	34.8%	19.6%	47.7%

century," Ward decked Gatti with a sickening hook to the liver and then tried his best to finish the job, only to have Gatti dig as only he can dig to produce an awe-inspiring rally. Ward then regrouped and battered Gatti to the point where the fight could have been stopped, but Cappuccino, as old-school as they come, let them continue until round's end.

The numbers were beyond eye-popping. Of their 110 combined connects, 102 were power punches – 42 for Gatti, 60 for Ward. The 102 power connects – still tied for the fourth most ever recorded by CompuBox in a 140-pound fight behind the record of 112 set in Round 10 of Augustus-Ward in July 2001 – were more than four times the combined 24.8 produced by typical 140-pounders, and their accuracy (increased to sublime levels due to their willingness to absorb punishment) was devastating; Gatti connected on 69 percent of his power punches while Ward landed 73 percent.

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Given the battering Gatti absorbed in the ninth, it was amazing that he managed to win the 10th. But that heroic effort didn't save him on the judges' scorecards. Frank Lombardi saw the fight as HBO's Harold Lederman did – 94-94. But he was overruled by Dick Flaherty (94-93) and Steve Weisfeld (95-93), who saw Ward as the majority decision winner.

While Ward prevailed on the scorecards, Gatti dominated statistically. He outlanded Ward 350-268 overall, 54-43 in jabs and 296-225 in power shots, mostly because he threw so many more punches (779-550 overall, 284-138 jabs, 495-412 power). The punishment dished out is best captured by the sky-high marksmanship on both sides: Gatti landed 45 percent of his total punches and 60 percent of his hooks, crosses and uppercuts while Ward connected on 49 percent of his total punches, 31 percent of his jabs and 55 percent of his power punches. As a point of comparison, the average 140-pounder connects on 29 percent of his total punches, 19 percent of his jabs and 36 percent of his power shots.

Given the historic fury that transpired in fight one, fight two was a must-make event. It was staged on November 23, 2002, at Boardwalk Hall in Atlantic City, which in boxing circles is known as "The House That Gatti Built." Fighting in his adopted hometown and applying a stick-and-move strategy, Gatti boxed rings around the slower, older Ward from beginning to end. He outlanded Ward in nine of 10 rounds overall – with Round 9 again being Ward's best with a 24-20 edge – en route to a wide unanimous decision (98-91, 98-91, 98-90).

Some illustrations of Gatti's dominance: Of a possible 30 statistical categories (total punches, jabs and power punches), Gatti prevailed 24-3-3 and created connect bulges of 276-180 (total), 71-46

Gatti soundly outworked and outlanded Ward to a 10-round unanimous decision in their rematch.

(jabs) and 205-134 (power). Gatti averaged 79.2 punches per round to Ward's 62.6 and was the more precise puncher overall (35 percent-29 percent) and in power shots (48 percent-32 percent). Ward did land a higher percentage of jabs (22 percent-20 percent), but that provided little solace, as Gatti averaged 36.2 jabs per round to Ward's 20.9 and commanded distance throughout.

The rubber match on June 7, 2003, was again waged at Boardwalk Hall, and in terms of action and drama, it fell between the frenetic first and the scientific second. Gatti maintained a high-octane pace (84.5 punches per round to Ward's 63.9), nicely divided his offense between jabs (384) and power punches (461) and was the far more accurate man (41 percent-20 percent overall, 26 percent-9 percent jabs, 54 percent-27 percent power) en route to decisive connect advantages in all three phases (349-128 overall, 98-21 jabs, 251-107 power). Gatti fired 38.4 jabs per round – 30 was the benchmark trainer Buddy McGirt established for all three fights – and Ward, who said before the fight that this would be his swan song, dropped Gatti in Round 6 but simply didn't have the energy in his nearly 38-year-old body to equal his rival's effort. He averaged 63.9 punches per round – slightly above the 58.7 junior welterweight average – but he no longer could cash in on his attempts the same way.

ED MULHOLLAND

Gatti dominated bout No. 3 in terms of stats, but Ward's heart kept it close and thrilling.

Despite the statistical and judicial dominance (Gatti prevailed 96-93 twice and 97-92), the back-and-forth action was enough for The Ring to deem it 2003's Fight of the Year, a fitting end to a most thrilling and tumultuous trilogy.

The total numbers in the series heavily favored Gatti, as he outlanded Ward 975-576 overall, 223-110 jabs and 752-466 power. Gatti threw exactly 20 more punches per round (80.5 to 60.5), was the far better jabber (7.4 connects per round to Ward's 3.7), connected on nearly 10 more power punches per round (25.1 to 15.5) and landed a far higher percentage of his punches (40 percent-32 percent overall, 22 percent-19 percent jabs, 54 percent-38 percent power). Finally, Gatti fulfilled McGirt's 30-jabs-per-round goal by averaging 34.3. Despite the massive numerical gaps, however, the assets and intangibles of Gatti and Ward created a transcendent symphony of violence that will be treasured for all time.

GATTI vs. WARD III

Total Punches Landed / Thrown

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
GATTI	17/67	21/74	31/77	28/75	45/89	27/73	70/126	24/62	31/81	55/121
	25.4%	28.4%	40.3%	37.3%	50.6%	37%	55.6%	38.7%	38.3%	45.5%
WARD	10/52	9/55	9/47	19/78	10/61	11/68	18/83	13/44	14/65	15/86
	19.2%	16.4%	19.1%	24.4%	16.4%	16.2%	21.7%	29.5%	21.5%	17.4%

Jab Landed / Thrown

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
GATTI	6/47	8/47	8/43	13/42	12/40	8/40	9/25	12/36	11/37	11/27
	12.8%	17%	18.6%	31%	30%	20%	36%	33.3%	29.7%	40.7%
WARD	3/33	2/27	1/26	0/10	1/18	2/30	0/14	5/26	6/32	1/22
	9.1%	7.4%	3.8%	0%	5.6%	6.7%	0%	19.2%	18.8%	4.5%

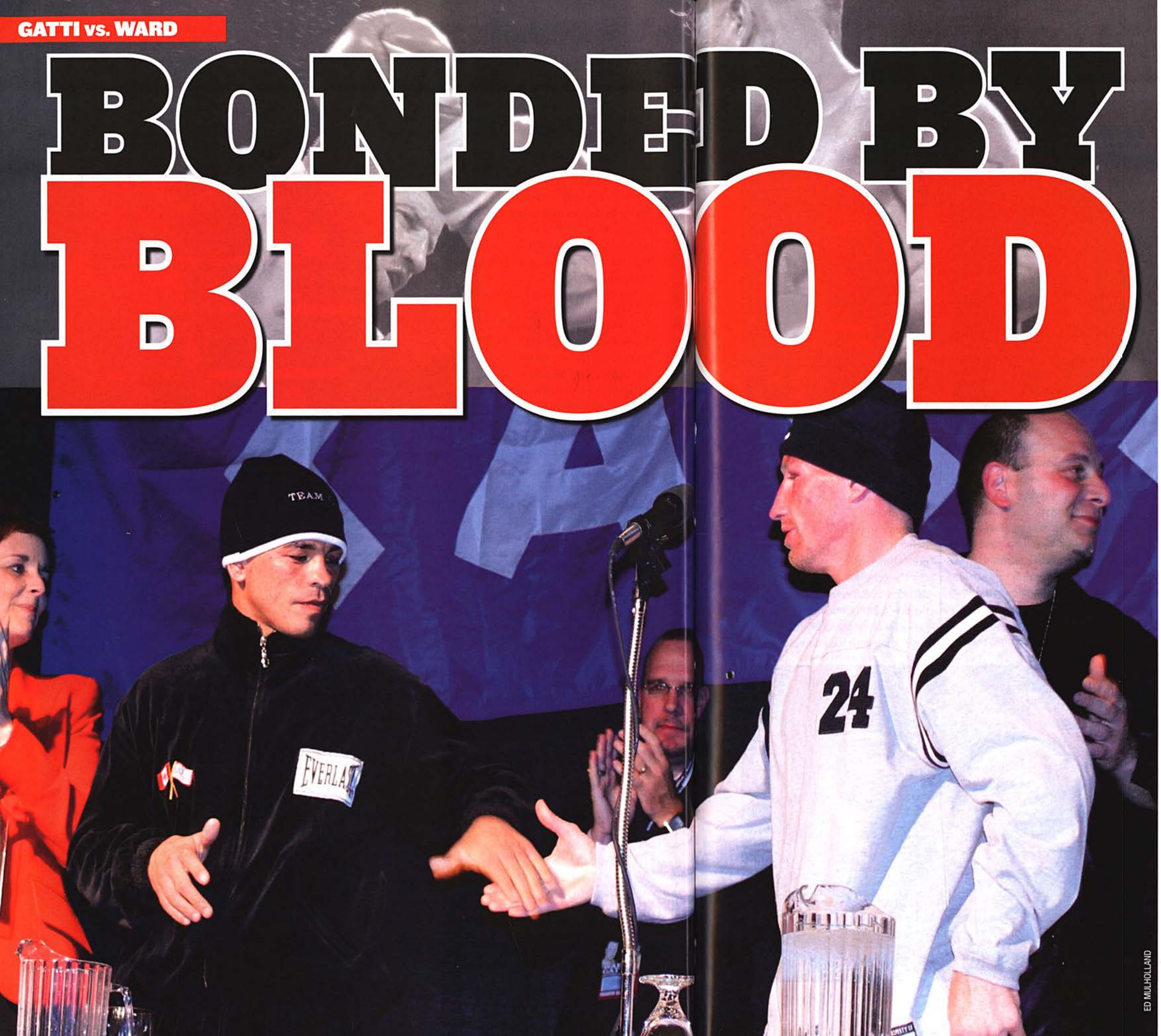
Power Punches Landed / Thrown

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
GATTI	11/20	13/27	23/34	15/33	33/49	19/33	61/101	12/26	20/44	44/94
	55%	48.1%	67.6%	45.5%	67.3%	57.6%	60.4%	46.2%	45.5%	46.8%
WARD	7/19	7/28	8/21	19/68	9/43	9/38	18/69	8/18	8/33	14/64
	36.8%	25%	38.1%	27.9%	20.9%	23.7%	26.1%	44.4%	24.2%	21.9%

Final Punch Stat Report

	Total Punches	Total Jabs	Power Punches
GATTI	349/845	98/384	251/461
	41.3%	25.5%	54.4%
WARD	128/639	21/238	107/401
	20%	8.8%	26.7%

BONDED BY BLOOD



ED MULHOLLAND

ARTURO GATTI AND MICKY WARD HAD NEVER MET PRIOR TO THEIR TRILOGY, BUT LIKE-MINDED WARRIORS BECAME FAST FRIENDS FOLLOWING THEIR CLASSIC FIRST BOUT

By Joseph Santoliquito

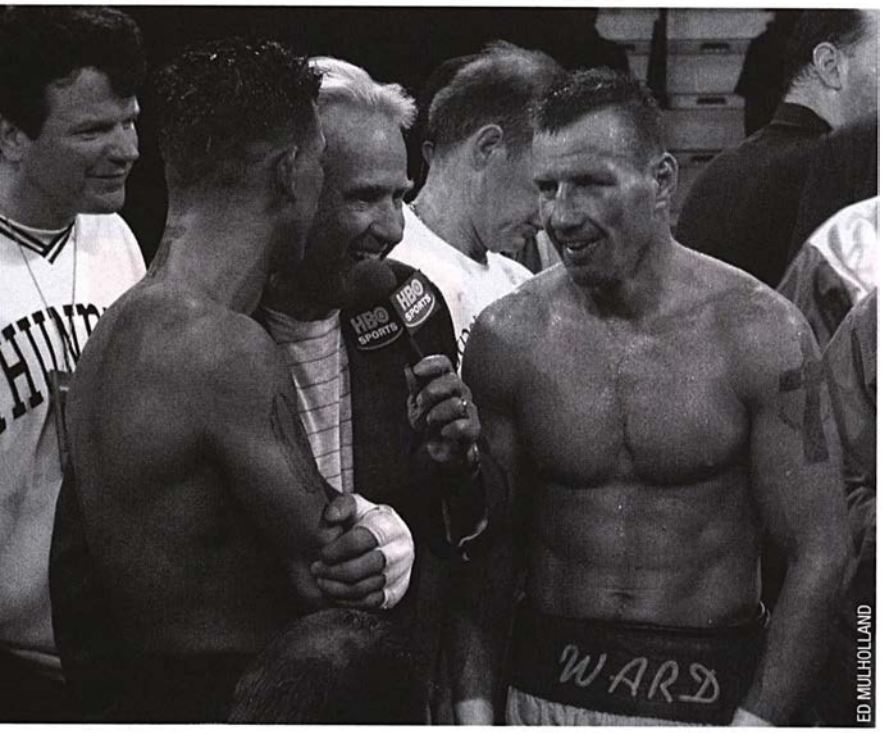
There was a commotion outside of the Backus Hospital emergency ward late Saturday night on May 18, 2002. Someone was arriving. The screaming siren and beep, beep, beep of the ambulance backing up created enough noise for Arturo Gatti to lift his aching face to get a glimpse.

Lying on a gurney pinned against a wall, Gatti could barely see. His left eye was swollen shut, his right eye but a slit.

It pained him to breathe. It pained him to move. It pained him to smile.

Still, "Thunder" managed to squeeze words through his thick tongue to the new arrival being wheeled in a few feet away. It happened to be the very soul he'd opposed a couple hours earlier in the ring, the one who shaped the mask of misery he wore – "Irish" Micky Ward.

"The first words out of his mouth were, 'Are you OK?' and they were real," Ward recalled.



ED MULHOLLAND

The bond between Gatti and Ward began immediately after the first fight and grew with each bout.

"That hit me harder than his punches. It opened the door to who Arturo was. That told me Arturo was a really good guy.

"Before our three fights, I had no relationship at all with Arturo. What I found was that we're both warriors who you'd have to kill to stop. I just knew we were so much alike."

Remove the ambulances, the milling nurses and doctors, gradually peel back the sterile walls and you could easily see the combatants somewhere else: Their gurneys were their stools, their surroundings the din of a corner tavern. And it's not just an analogy. Within a few hours of trying to destroy each other, the blotched pair was chugging down smuggled-in cans of Bud Light in the Norwich, Connecticut, hospital corridor, laughing like old neighborhood friends.

The wrought-iron bond forged in the three fights between Gatti and Ward came from blood, sweat, tears, cuts and bruises over 30 of the most grueling rounds in boxing history. To this day, it hurts Ward each time he thinks about his pal Gatti, the Hall of Famer who died on July 11, 2009, under murky circumstances. And Ward reflects on his friend every day.

"How can anyone forget someone like Arturo?" Ward asked. "We were like brothers. He made me laugh, and when I look back at our fights and our relationship, it was real and it was true.

"The funny thing is this was someone who tried to take my head off for 30 rounds who actually cared about how I felt. You have things that you go through in everyday life. Something may go wrong, then I think of the funny things we did and that always makes me smile.

"When he died, it was like a death in the family. It's something that you never get over."

Like losing a blood brother.

"That's the interesting thing about them," recalled Top Rank vice president Carl Moretti, who in 2002 was the VP and chief matchmaker at New Jersey-based Main Events, Gatti's promoter. "I remember when we did the initial press conference up at the Mohegan Sun Casino to announce the fight. Nobody was there.

"They really didn't know each other, not before that night … We were downstairs in two separate rooms involved in small talk, and we went up and there was no media. It didn't have the setting of a normal press conference.

"They really spoke (openly) for the first time in the emergency room after the first fight. But their friendship, in my opinion, happened before that."

Starting with their embrace after

ED MULHOLLAND

ED MULHOLLAND

the final bell. It was The Ring's 2002 Fight of the Year and the first to be given that distinction by the Boxing Writers Association of America.

Pat Lynch, Gatti's lifelong manager, remembers being alone with his client in the back of Gatti's dressing room.

Gatti was looking at his battered face in the mirror, when he turned and asked Lynch, "Remember when I told you the toughest fight of my life is when I fight somebody just like me?"

"Yeah," Lynch replied.

"Tonight I fought somebody just like me," Gatti said.

THE WARD-GATTI FRIENDSHIP defied the oft-quoted idea that opposites attract. They could not have been more alike.

After their post-fight commiseration, the rapport between Ward and Gatti continued going into the rematch. They met at Gleason's Gym in Brooklyn to pose for the December 2002 Ring cover, which showed them side-by-side carrying baseball bats.

"After that shoot, they really started to interact with each other," said Lynch. "Before that, they didn't really speak to one another. There was still a little distance between them. They really weren't talking, I would say, as close friends. Micky had his team and we had ours."

Then they went their separate ways.

It was Gatti who made the next chapter possible.

"Arturo called me up asking about what was going on for the third fight," said Lynch. "He told me to get Kathy (Duva, Main Events' president) on the phone and make it happen. He wasn't going to fight anyone else but Micky.

"I remember Arturo telling me, 'Micky gave me an opportunity after the first fight. He deserves to get paid, and that's who I'm fighting, or I'm not fighting at all.'"

Once the date was set, Ward made it clear that this fight would be his last.

Prominent sportswriter Ron Borges went to see Ward at his gym ahead of the event and broached the idea of winning and the tease of a million-dollar payday to do it a fourth time. Micky replied, "What good will it be to have more money if I won't be smart enough to count it?"

The damage inflicted during the ensuing 10 rounds would justify his concern. But it was also the point when his relationship with Gatti truly blossomed.

Miraculously, Gatti and Ward seemed to grow closer the more they beat each other up.

Borges saw it firsthand, though in an unusual role.

Security wouldn't allow the Boston Globe writer into the local Atlantic City, New Jersey, hospital emergency area where the fighters had been taken. So Borges called the late Dennis Dueltgen, who was then Main Events' site coordinator, to help him.

Dueltgen came out to meet Borges at the hospital's security desk.

"Dennis told them, 'This is Dr. Borges, he's Micky Ward's private physician from Massachusetts. He has to get in and see him right now!'" Borges recalled, laughing hysterically. "I walked in and there was Micky on one gurney, and on the other side was Gatti, within a few feet of each other."

Borges was greeted by Ward, who was on an IV drip, and Gatti right next to him with his hand in a cast. Sitting between the fighters were their fiancées, crying. A few hours later, Ward was discharged. Gatti would have to stay for more evaluations.

ED MULHOLLAND

Gatti and Ward remained close friends following their trilogy and Ward's retirement.

But first, Ward had to find his sneakers. He gingerly got up and jokingly accused Gatti of stealing them. They laughed. Ultimately, Ward found his shoes under the bed.

That occurred on an early Sunday June morning in 2003. What happened next still resonates with Borges almost two decades later.

"Just before Micky left, he walked over to Arturo and they hugged each other," Borges recalled. "They kissed each other on the cheek. Then Micky slipped a little white envelope into Arturo's hand. Micky told Arturo, 'Tonight, I think you're going to need these more than me.'"

The envelope contained Ward's pain pills.

"That was the most touching moment that I saw between them," Borges said. "That said how much they cared about one another."

What they learned was that Ward was Gatti, and Gatti was Ward in their approach to boxing.

"They found another guy who was going out to win, no matter what the price," Borges said.

EVERY TIME WARD AND GATTI were together, they shut out the world. It was just the two of them, whether it was at a bar – many they closed – or in more formal settings.

"They always made it a point to get together," said Lou DiBella, the Hall of Fame promoter who resurrected Ward's career. "There was one time with just the three of us at a clam bar in the Mohegan Sun. They were drinking beer, telling stories, and I was eating clams.

"They were holding court, and everyone walking by couldn't believe they were that close."

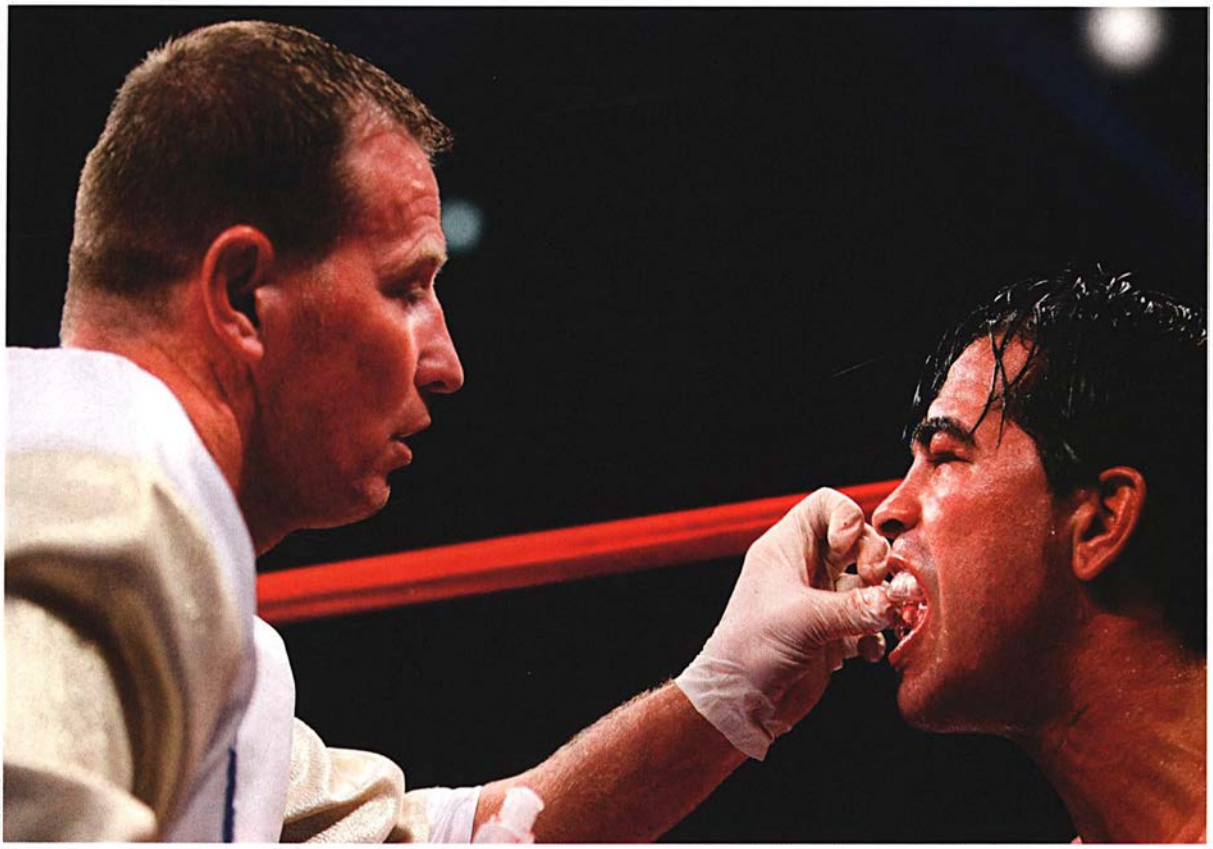
To those frequently in their company, the running narrative was that they spoke a language only they understood – Ward's Boston-ese and Gatti's Canadian background mixed with his Italian heritage and New Jersey accent producing unintelligible diphthongs.

"They were like instant brothers," said Jolene Mizzone, Main Events' vice president of operations and matchmaker, who was often out with them. "Arturo only brought in his corner when he fought. That was it. There was no other baggage.

"After the fights with Micky, he started bringing Micky in for his ring walks. Arturo made sure Micky was brought in every single time. When they were out, as much as they would drink, they always worried about everyone else around them. That's just the way they were.

"After Arturo beat Leonard Dorin in two (in July 2004), he was ready to go. They were at Bally's until four in the morning. You couldn't hang with those two. They were nonstop. Putting the drinking aside, they were both the same person. They could be obliterated, but if you were close to them, they watched out for you."

Teddy Cruz, Gatti's strength and conditioning coach, said the impetus to the Gatti-Ward bond happened in



AL BELLO

Ward trained Gatti and worked the corner for his friend's final bout against Alfonso Gomez.

that Connecticut hospital.

"I remember that night, because Micky kept commenting how Arturo's head was like granite," Cruz recalled. "Arturo was lying there on the other side saying, 'I never thought the day would come when I would actually meet a guy like me in the ring.' I remember the first thing Arturo asked him, too: 'Are you OK?'

"Looking at it from the outside in, you didn't see how genuine and real they both are and how they were so real with each other. That was the thing about both of them. If Arturo didn't like you, you knew it. He was done with you. Micky fought and behaved the same way.

"Arturo admired Micky."

The admiration was mutual.

Even understandable.

Ward was supposed to walk Gatti out for the Dorin fight in Atlantic City, but there was one glaring problem – Ward had been enjoying himself a bit too much that day. Gatti loved to party, but when it came to fight preparation, he was deathly serious. Everyone was quiet in Gatti's dressing room prior to the ring walk.

"I was drunk before that fight, and everyone knew I was supposed to walk Arturo out," Ward admitted. "Everyone was telling me not to let Arturo see me like that. It was a tough day. I think I forgot to pick up my wife from the airport that day; I was having a good time.

"I walked into Arturo's dressing room and he sees me. Everyone thought he was going to tear my head off. Arturo called me back into the bathroom. Then he gives me a big hug and says, 'I love it! If you were fighting, I would have been (drunker). Don't worry about it.'"

Ward, in a stupor, walked Gatti out.

Everything was a competition between them. They never let up on each other, whether it was morning runs, racing go-karts or playing golf.

Ward tells the story about the time he visited Gatti during training camp in Florida. One day, Ward outdrove him on the golf course. The round lasted about three holes before Gatti told Ward they had to wrap it up – he'd suddenly remembered that he had to take a nap before training.

"Arturo hated to lose – at anything," said Ward, laughing. "I'm the same way."

After Gatti died, Ward was at every memorial service. Anytime he talks to Lynch, DiBella, Mizzone, Moretti or Duva, he asks how Gatti's family is doing.

"Arturo is a part of me," Ward said. "It's why it was so hard when he died. It was like part of me died, and in a way, it did. He brought the best out of me, in and out of the ring, and I would like to think I brought out the best in him."

Ward carries Gatti's spirit.

He was a pallbearer for Gatti's funeral. Before lowering Gatti into his grave, Ward threw a touching left hook at the casket.

"I had to get the last shot in," Ward said, wiping away a tear.

THE UNTHINKABLE

'KILLED IN BRAZIL?' EXPLORES THE ONGOING CONTROVERSY SURROUNDING THE DEATH OF ARTURO GATTI

By Jimmy Tobin

WHAT HAPPENED TO ARTURO GATTI that night in Brazil? For many, the answer is obvious: He was murdered. Murdered because any other explanation is unacceptable. Suicide didn't fit with Gatti's legacy. How could a man who refused to quit, who was deified for his capacity to endure suffering, take his own life?

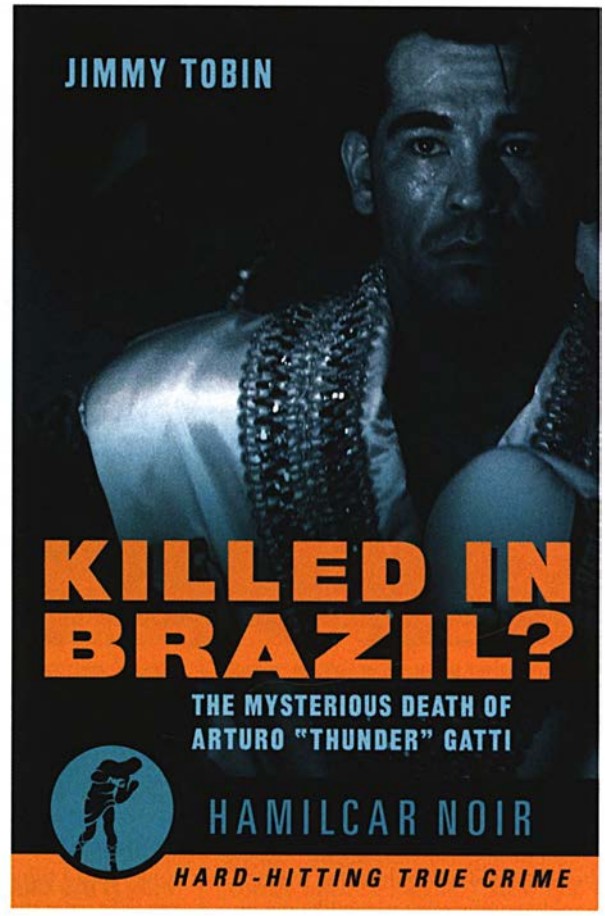
There were forensic peculiarities, too – crime-scene details that fed suspicion of foul play – that made Gatti's death more than just out of keeping with his character. Those peculiarities were compelling enough for the people who knew Gatti best to deny the results of the Brazilian authorities' investigation: that Gatti took his own life, that his wife, Amanda Rodrigues, was innocent of any wrongdoing.

A private investigation followed, as did an ugly court battle, both evidence of just how strongly people felt they knew Gatti, what he was and wasn't capable of. And Amanda, what was she capable of? That too was key to solving the mystery.

Whether those answers are satisfactory is but one more question, one for the reader. Still, those answers are offered earnestly in *Killed in Brazil? The Mysterious Death of Arturo "Thunder" Gatti*, and as completely as the evidence allowed. There was a strange resistance among people who knew Gatti to speak about him, at least to a stranger – one who hadn't proved he could be trusted, one supposes, with their truth. Sometimes we fulfill our duty to the ones we care about not with our words, but with our silence.

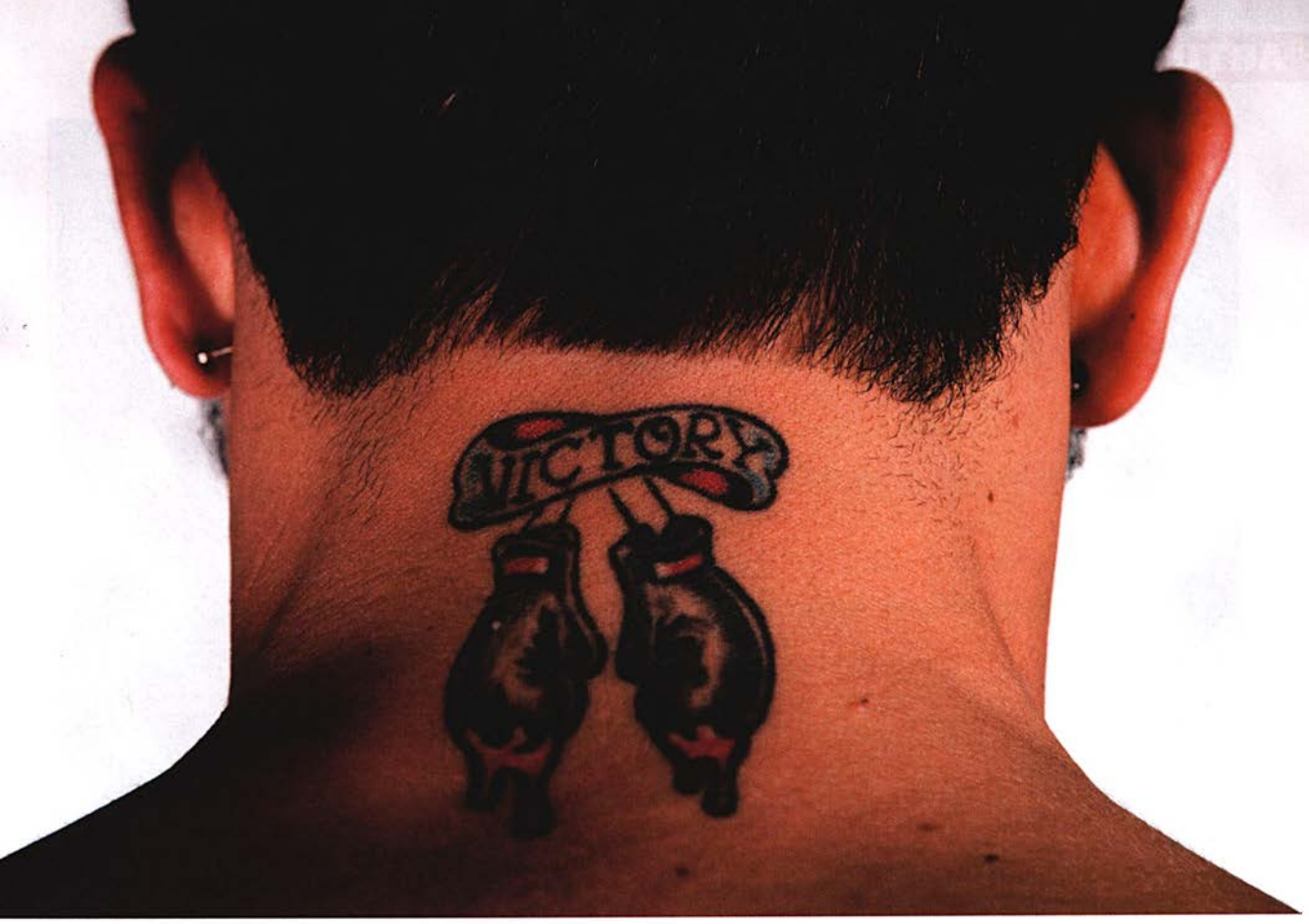
Other times, however, we fight – explicitly, unequivocally – for those people. The following excerpt from the book presents some of the people fighting for Gatti, fighting to clear him of any agency in his demise, fighting to prove him a victim.

"Everything is what it is, and not another thing."
– Bishop Butler



ALREADY BURIED BY HIS FAMILY in Montreal, Gatti was celebrated at a mass at St. John the Baptist Church in Jersey City. Among the more than six hundred people present to say their goodbyes were actor Mickey Rourke; fighters Micky Ward, Tracy Patterson, and Chuck Wepner; and Chuck Zito, the former president of the New York chapter of the Hells Angels. An unmistakable figure, Zito could be seen accompanying Gatti on his ring walks. This eclectic group was proof of Arturo's charm, of the magnetic quality of the fighter who loved so easily. Moreover, it was a testament to his mythological capacity for violence, one that could transfix even the abolitionists.

Lou DiBella brought the attendees to their feet when he told them, "God knows that Arturo Gatti never quit in his life. Arturo Gatti did not quit in Brazil." Skepticism about Gatti's suicide, and, by extension, Amanda's innocence, ran high. In that grieving echo chamber on the corner of Brooks Place and John F. Kennedy Boulevard, that skepticism's mournful expression was amplified. Only a few hours earlier, the Brazilian authorities had changed Gatti's cause of death from homicide to suicide and



ordered Amanda's release from police custody. It was an unpopular decision among the attendees, people who had gathered to celebrate a man who loved life – a man who wouldn't quit.

NO, GATTI WOULDN'T QUIT. The news from Brazil did nothing for his friends' suspicions. [Mike] Skowronski was incredulous, telling Deadspin's Dashiell Bennett, "Absolutely a hundred percent couldn't ever see him commit suicide. He loved life. If he was going to kill himself, he would have called and said goodbye to me."

The image of Gatti as a man happy in the languor of retirement was chorused by his closest friends and family. Asked about the mysterious details of Gatti's death, his nemesis-turned-friend and trainer, Ward, said: "I just can't see him taking his own life. It's just not him. Everything in life was goin' good for him." Like Ward, a close friend of the Gatti family, Ivano Scarpa, thought the suicide explanation impossible. "Nobody believes whatsoever that there's even a one percent chance of suicide," said Scarpa. "He lived his life to the fullest." Count Gatti's ex-fiancée [Erika] Rivera among the skeptics too. She called the suicide explanation "bullshit," saying Gatti "could get a little crazy, he was a little superstitious, but suicidal? Never. He was a free spirit who loved life." Montreal boxer Howard Grant, a close friend of Gatti's, was even stronger in his refusal of the suicide verdict, telling CTV News: "I will go to my grave, I will put my hand on the Bible, and tell God to strike me down, there is no way Arturo killed himself."

Speaking of Gatti's suicide years later, Kathy Duva concedes that she "can't look into someone's soul and tell what they can do" but cannot bring herself to accept the explanation for Gatti's death. "The thing that makes me not believe is that if he was going to take his life he wouldn't take it that way." This tempered doubt is in stark contrast to the dogmatic assertions of her fellow suicide skeptics. She moves in from the poles of murder and suicide to a position that exhibits greater nuance. Duva continues: "He had access to drugs; he might take drugs. He might drive his car into a wall. He wouldn't hang himself with his wife's purse strap. I knew him well enough to know that. How he did it? There were easier ways, less confounding ways."

Gatti had his dark moments and they are well-documented. But Duva encourages a shift in focus from the perplexity of the act itself to its logistical peculiarities. "Something sudden – I can buy that. But this was a plan. How did he pull it off in that state? And the wife's purse strap seems like a message. Somebody did it and I don't think it was him. I mean, why would you hang yourself from so high? You don't need to do that."

The timing seemed odd too. "He had gotten his permanent residence," remembers Duva. "He planned to become a U.S. citizen. I had written a letter to help him; there were some concerns about how this retired boxer was going to earn a living in the U.S." Upon getting the good news, Gatti came into Duva's office. "He was so happy, he thanked

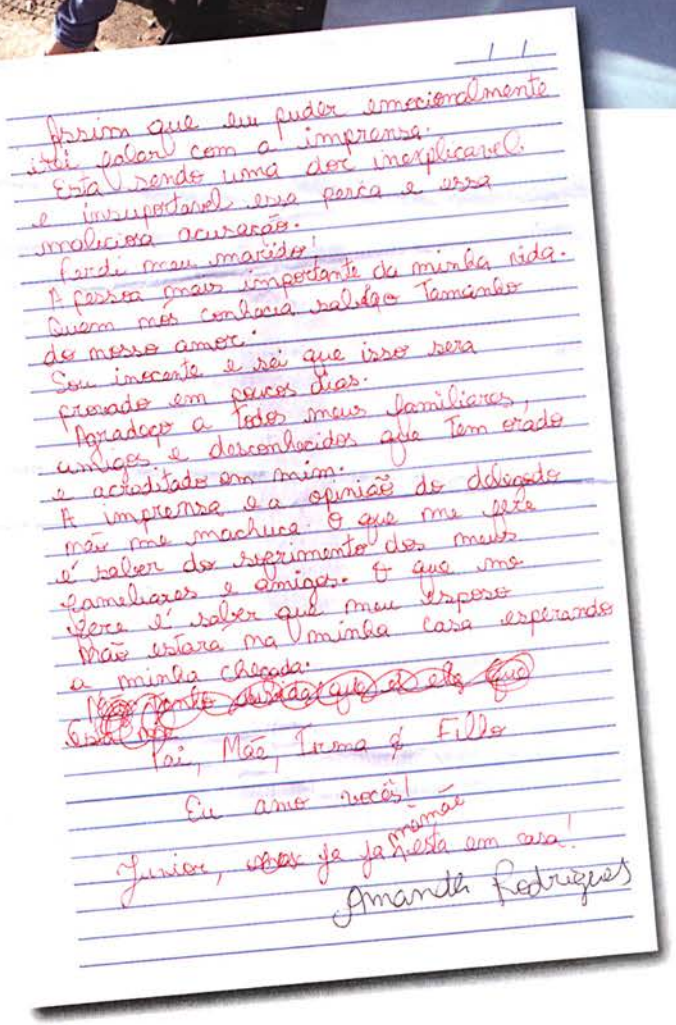
Amanda Rodrigues is taken into custody by Brazilian police shortly after Arturo Gatti's death in 2009.

me. Now, you're so depressed you can kill yourself but you're making plans like that?"

Duva knows the psychology of the men she works with, their proclivity for risk-taking and self-destruction, but "I don't believe in coincidences," she says, "and I see this as a series of unbelievable coincidences."

That is Duva's opinion now, and it was that of Main Events ten years before. Through spokeswoman Ellen Haley, the promotional outfit made clear their position on his death, saying "we do not believe that he took his own life," adding: "We believe that once the results of that investigation are revealed, the truth will come to light and justice will be done." Yes, while the investigation may have been completed in the eyes of Brazilian authorities, in the United States and Canada, there were people who believed further digging was in order.

NO ONE WAS MORE STEADFAST in his suspicions about Gatti's suicide than Pat Lynch. He refused that explanation from the very beginning, and no



Assim que eu puder emocionalmente
irei falar com a imprensa.
Esta sendo uma dor inexplicavel
e insuportavel essa perca e essa
maliciosa acusação.
Perdi meu marido!
A pessoa mais importante da minha vida.
Quem nos conhecia sabe o Tamanho
do nosso amor.
Sou inocente e sei que isso sera
provado em poucos dias.
Agradeço a todos meus familiares,
amigos e desconhecidos que Tem orado
e acreditado em mim.
A imprensa e a opinião do delegado
não me machuca. O que me fere
é saber do sofrimento dos meus
familiares e amigos. O que me
fere é saber que meu esposo
não estará na minha casa esperando
a minha chegada.
Pai, Mãe, Irma & Filho
Eu amo vocês!
Junior, ~~[illegible]~~ ja ja mamãe esta em casa!
Amanda Rodrigues

Rodrigues, once a suspect for homicide, is released from jail after Brazilian investigators ruled Gatti's death a suicide.

investigation conducted in a foreign country was going to convince him otherwise. At the memorial, when asked about Gatti's death, Lynch remained unshaken: "No way, in a million years, would Arturo Gatti commit suicide." And Lynch was willing to prove it. In his opinion, the Brazilian investigation was pathetic. At the memorial, he vowed to pursue a full investigation into Gatti's death. In fact, the wheels of that investigation were in place even before Gatti was determined to have died by his own hand. Lynch had retained Brazilian lawyers in the hopes of again putting Amanda on trial, either in Canada or Brazil. What he was short on was evidence that justified reopening the case. For that, he turned to Paul Ciolino and Joe Moura.

Ciolino, who died in 2017, had the bearing of a gumshoe. His thick eyebrows, bulldog's jowls, and heavy Chicago accent gave him a knowing, intimidating mien. He spoke forcefully, using a mix of legal jargon and street slang that gave you the impression he was as comfortable on the stand as he was on the street corner – and unlikely to slip up on either. In this respect, he was perfect for television. You might have seen him on television too. Ciolino, who Dan Rather once called "one of America's top five investigators," had at one time or another appeared on Fox, MSNBC, CNN, ABC, NBC, and CBS. He didn't just look the part though. Before operating his own business – the Paul J. Ciolino and Associates International Forensic Consortium – Ciolino worked in the Department of Child and Family Services for the state of Illinois as the lead homicide and mass molestation advisor. While there he obtained over two hundred written confessions pertaining to homicides and sexual assaults. Ciolino was also the first private investigator to be certified as a Forensic Criminal Profiler.

That high-profile case caught the attention of Lynch, who had seen Ciolino's work on the Amanda Knox case for the CBS investigative journalism show 48 Hours. Lynch was thrilled with the findings of the private investigation too, saying that the work Ciolino and Moura put in was a "gift from God." That work consisted in hiring "two of the biggest names in forensic pathology, an expert in forensic animation, an expert in human movements, a retired FBI agent, a doctor who is an injury and causation medical doctor and an expert in injuries, and a criminal profiler and crime scene expert." The plan was to use police photos to physically and digitally reconstruct the crime scene to determine whether Gatti could have hung himself. The last two members of the team, though, make clear the real purpose of the investigation: Ciolino and Moura intended to prove Gatti was murdered.

WORLD BEAT

CANADA

BY JAMIE REBNER

Arturo Gatti is most synonymous with Atlantic City, New Jersey, because that's where most of his career-defining bouts took place and where he built a loyal legion of supporters. However, when Arturo stepped into the ring, he also represented Canada, because that was where he spent his formative years.

Interestingly enough, determining Gatti's birthplace wasn't as straightforward as expected. Some sources say he was born in Italy and moved to Montreal at a young age. However, in the countdown show to his bout with Floyd Mayweather Jr. in 2005, Arturo stated that he was born in Montreal. So until I get my hands on his birth certificate, the definitive answer to that question remains unsettled.

Arturo had a successful amateur career in Canada, reportedly winning six national Golden Gloves titles. At 19, he decided to follow his older brother Joe to New Jersey to turn pro. Pat Lynch, who managed both Gatti brothers, explained that "Joe was getting busy here in the States, whereas he wasn't fighting as much in Canada. And then he mentioned that he had a younger brother who wasn't going to the Olympic trials and who wants to come down and turn pro."

As Gatti started to build a cult following in Atlantic City due to his all-action style and never-say-die attitude, he became a major attraction in the Jersey area. Greater attendance meant more money for everyone involved, so it made sense to keep him headlining shows there.

But that didn't mean his hometown fans didn't want to see him live. "Montreal always wanted him to come there and fight," said Kathy Duva of Main Events, who promoted Gatti throughout his career. "I had many conversations with Yvon Michel about that. As much as they would like to have had him there, we were making so much money in Atlantic City that there was no way to justify going to Montreal. I had to make decisions, and at that point in Arturo's career, it wasn't about building his brand anymore. It was about making as much money as we possibly could in the time we had left."

However, Main Events made an exception at the start of the millennium, and Gatti showed the same ability to attract passionate fans in Canada as he had in the States. "I think the timing was right," said Lynch. "And it was a success if you think about it because he drew a tremendous crowd."

Arturo made his Montreal homecoming on September 8, 2000, at the Molson Centre against Indiana native Joe Hutchinson, who was 18-0-2. Meanwhile, Gatti had won three straight, scoring early stoppages of Reyes Munoz, Joey Gamache and Eric Jakubowski. Those wins came as a rebound from a trying 1998 campaign that saw him lose three consecutive fights, including back-to-back thrillers with Ivan Robinson.

Hutchinson provided a much stiffer test than expected, forcing Gatti once again to reveal his trademark toughness, tenacity and determination. The bout was dramatic from the get-go as a nasty cut opened up above Gatti's left eyebrow in the second round, which referee Michael Griffin ruled to have been caused by a punch. A head clash opened a second cut on Gatti's right eye in the third round, and showing his frustration, Arturo twice blatantly

Arturo Gatti had a hellish homecoming bout due to horrific eye cuts

attempted to retaliate with a butt of his own. Gatti's troubles increased in the fourth round after he lost a point for a low blow.

Facing an uphill battle, Gatti responded with urgency, constantly walking down Hutchinson and winging vicious hooks, especially to the American's rib cage. Arturo scored a knockdown in the sixth round from a glancing counter uppercut. The tide continued to shift in the local fighter's favor as a point was deducted from Hutchinson for a headbutt in the eighth round.

Gatti kept up the pressure until the final bell, and after 10 rounds, he earned a unanimous decision. In the end, Hutchinson had proved to be a stern test as he landed his fair share of shots on Gatti's chin. Although it was far from a dominant performance, Gatti supplied his passionate hometown fans with a victory under far-from-ideal circumstances.

But Lynch gives his explanation for why the fight with Hutchinson proved to be more problematic than anticipated.

"That fight week was such a distraction because he was getting pulled in a million directions. Everybody wanted a piece of him and rightfully so. He was from Montreal, he was a (former world titleholder) and he was coming home for the first time. So there was a lot of media coverage about it. And then he would visit his mom and wind up eating something at her house. So he was enjoying that moment. I don't think he was 100-percent focused on the fight. That's what made it difficult, which is no knock to Joe Hutchinson. If Arturo would've been more sequestered and if he had had a few more fights in Montreal before that one, I don't think Hutchinson would have lasted the way he did in the ring.

"We were lucky to get out of there with a win. The biggest fear honestly was the referee or the doctor stopping it because the cuts were so bad. If that fight were somewhere else, it would have been stopped. I remember the referee saying after the fight that when you got 20,000 screaming fans rooting for Arturo, he didn't want to stop the fight."

After beating Hutchinson, Gatti would lose convincingly to Oscar De La Hoya in five rounds, which he followed up with a win over Terron Millett. That set up the first fight with Ward, and as they say, the rest is history. Duva only has fond memories of the Gatti-Ward trilogy, one of the greatest in the sport's storied history.

"I think that's one of the reasons people remember it the way they do, because they put it all on the line as athletes. Certainly, their careers were on the line because the loser

DI NARDO

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Gatti was soundly beaten by Oscar De La Hoya after the Hutchinson bout.

believed his career was over. So you can understand the intensity and the reason they put it on the line like that. But what's amazing is that they did it again in the second and third fights when they knew their careers weren't over and they were making more money than they ever made in their lives. So I think that is the testament to the fact that they were both great sportsmen. That's what they were in it for: just the pure desire to compete and be the best."

What stood out most to Lynch about the trilogy was that it never devolved into the disrespect and animosity that are common in many boxing rivalries. "What came out of the trilogy for me is the great sportsmanship that they showed and what it did for the sport. It showed a lot of young fighters and boxing fans that you don't have to talk trash. These guys killed each other for 30 rounds and wound up becoming the best of friends. It was great for the sport of boxing. I still text and talk to Micky whenever I get a chance. We all became a big family, which is terrific. And all I can say is it was such an honor and privilege to have been Arturo's manager for his entire career. And it was more of an honor and a privilege that we became such good friends, and he became such a big part of my family, because he was a great guy." RING

JAPAN

BY YURIKO MIYATA

Sometimes the colorful phrases that sportswriters use to describe a boxer in their fight reports eventually becomes the fighter's nickname. Ray Robinson's famous moniker is said to be the result of a writer saying he was "sweet as sugar" following an amateur bout.

And "Japanese Gatti" is an enduring fighter nickname for a crowd-pleasing fighter with unimaginable durability and guts.

When people went crazy about Arturo Gatti in America, a keen boxing writer, Akira Homma, called Takao Onda "The Japanese Gatti" in an article that ran in the Japanese magazine World Boxing. That was likely the first time a Japanese fighter was compared to the Italian-Canadian slugger.

Onda was a domestic-level welterweight who won the 48th annual All Japan Rookies tournament in 2001. He also earned MVP honors by knocking out future OPBF champion Taisei Marumoto with a left hook in the second round of the final. Onda, who finished his career in 2009 with a 20-8 (15 KOs) record, did not mind getting hit or knocked down as he closed in on his opponents. He always believed his hard blows, especially his vicious lefts to the body, would see him to victory. He was an unforgettable boxer, even though he never came close to fighting for a major world title during his career.

Some have called Koji Arisawa and three-division titleholder Akira Yaegashi "The Japanese Gatti," too.

Arisawa, who had two national 130-pound title reigns (1996-1998 and 1998-2001), was a very handsome boxer but is remembered best for his merciless attack in the ring.

Yaegashi was known as a smart, all-around technician during his early days but evolved into a dramatic fighter following his grueling battle with Somporn Seeta (aka Pornsawan Porpramook), whom he stopped in 10 rounds in 2011 for the WBA strawweight title. Even in losses to domestic rival Kazuto Ioka in 2012 and to the great Roman Gonzalez in 2014, Yaegashi, who briefly held the Ring flyweight championship, impressed everybody with his dauntless spirit.

Yuki Beppu, a welterweight with a 21-1-1 (20 KOs) record, appears to be the latest candidate for the "Japanese Gatti" moniker.

This past December, Beppu won the WBO Asia Pacific title with a tremendous brawl against Ryota Yada in Osaka. During the 12-round bout, which was recognized as Japan's 2019 Fight of the Year, Beppu was floored five times. He decked Yada once and got up from each of his knockdowns to finally stop the former national champion with a heavy combination in the 10th round.

WHEN A FIGHTER is said to have "Gatti-like" attributes, it means he or she has a "lose the battle to win the war" style. It is not surprising that quite a few boxers speak unfavorably of that style and mentality, as it is the opposite of what any good trainer would teach them in the gym: Hit without getting hit. However, they are surely aware that it is only human nature to love warriors who can fight beyond their limits, as Gatti once did.

Anyone who has made covering boxing their profession relishes the boxer who can pull him or her back to being a pure fan. For Yoshiko Kamo, the most emotional boxing writer in Japan in my opinion, it was Gatti. She was struck by "Thunder" when she saw Ivan Robinson-Gatti I on TV in the summer of 1998.

"I was just excited," Kamo told me. "The way he fought was almost unreal. How could he take that much punishment and still punch back? Gatti was like, 'I cannot stop fighting as long as I'm alive.' I was totally into him since then."

An unrivaled boxing writer, Kamo's careful interviews translate boxers' true joy and pain into beautiful stories. She says that her heart always ached when watching boxers who she knew deeply in person, but she wasn't conflicted when Gatti fought.

"I could be a 100 percent fan with Gatti, maybe because I had never met and talked to him," she said. "I loved how he fought, and I liked to imagine how lovely and honest he was if it was true that he once shed tears thinking about the girlfriend he broke up with during a press conference."

It was 2001 when a homeless cat bore nine kittens in Kamo's small backyard. She named the most lively tomboy of them after her favorite fighter. She knew it was a girl, and it was a last name, but she just wanted to call her: "Gatti, Gatti."

Following Gatti-Ward I, Kamo knew the continued rivalry would be too great to watch on TV, so she decided to fly to America for the rematch. She did not hesitate to take the gamble, jumping on an airplane to America without a ticket to the fight, as all of them had sold out a couple of days after being released on Ticketmaster.

"I had never been so desperate to see a fight live, before or since, in my life," Kamo said. "In New York, my friend Alice helped me to find one canceled $150 ticket two days before the fight after countless phone calls to the box office and ticket brokers."

The dim light in the bus heading to Atlantic City still made her nervous about her ticket really being reserved at the box office. The casino city, which she was visiting for the first time, looked dark, seedy and lonesome, not as she imagined. Only the fight banners on the street to the Boardwalk Hall encouraged her.

"So, I don't know how to describe how I was relieved and pleased when I finally got the ticket in my hand and the lady in the ticket booth said, 'Enjoy!' I still remember how her 'Enjoy!' sounded. It touched my heart. 'I will, by all means!' I said to her."

She got a beer, joined the Gatti fanatics and screamed during the entire fight.

"It was the happiest moment, like a gift from God," she recalled. "But at that time, I promised myself that next time I will be there as a writer. I will meet him, someday, as a writer, and say, 'Thank you, thank you for showing me what boxing is all about.' And, you know, I regret that I believed 'someday' would come."

Kitty "Gatti" is 19 years old and still there while all her siblings are in heaven. She is still able to jump up and turn the door handle of the writer's office to watch Kamo work. Yoshiko stops her writing to pat the old "Gatti" and imagines that the fighter, who was so incredibly tough in the ring, comes back, saying, "Surprise!"

THUNDEROUS RETURN

Just one bout removed from three consecutive losses in 1998 (including The Ring's Fight of the Year vs. Ivan Robinson), Arturo Gatti made a powerful statement in the HBO-televised co-feature to Oscar De La Hoya-Derrell Coley on February 26, 2000. Inside a packed Madison Square Garden, Gatti savagely bombed out fellow two-division titleholder Joey Gamache in the second round of their junior welterweight bout. Gatti won three of his next four bouts (losing to De La Hoya in 2001) before engaging in his unforgettable trilogy with Micky Ward.

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